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Cuisine

ISSUE 138
JANUARY 2010

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FISH: A NEW SCHOOL OF THINKING

CHEFS BEHIND THE BBQ: JUSTIN NORTH & AL BROWN

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY KEN DOWNIE AT THE WINE BAR WINEHOT. WINEHOT.CO.NZ

As fascinating as it is that rather large icebergs have been silently gliding towards us, it is a sinister indication of the condition the environment is in. All the hot air created in debates over carbon emissions trading and who the biggest emitter is doesn't seem to get us any closer to a collective sense of responsibility and what we, as a race, can do to stem the destruction we have inflicted on our planet.

We define aspects of our society by how we shop. We need to reconsider the impact of that philosophy, particularly on the food we buy, or we will continue to be wasteful and indulged.

We have our own chunk of ice on the cover this month, drawing attention to a new school of thinking about what fish we eat and the impact of constantly eating from just a few preferred, and diminishing, fish stocks. Certainly, all the leading chefs we discussed this with were right behind the notion of broadening our seafood spectrum. The topic will only become more pressing and it has engendered a great deal of discussion in the *Cuisine* offices. We would also love to hear your thoughts on this subject, so don't hesitate to email us.

This is a sizzling summer issue with a record number of recipes for you and, as it is the holiday season and a time to enjoy all things outdoors, we bring you a range of brilliant dishes from as far afield as India and Tahiti, plus simple and delectable ideas for the barbecue that will have you longing for a never-ending summer!

Eric

ERIC MATTHEWS

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– see page 86

Winner, Best Food Magazine, 2007
Le Cordon Bleu World Food Media Awards

Nominee, Best Drink Magazine, 2007
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THIS SIMPLE, LIGHT FOOD HAS CLEAR FLAVOURS THAT WON'T TAX THE PALATE IN HOT WEATHER AND RELIES ON FRESH PRODUCE RATHER THAN COMPLICATED COOKING TECHNIQUES THAT TRANSFORM INGREDIENTS

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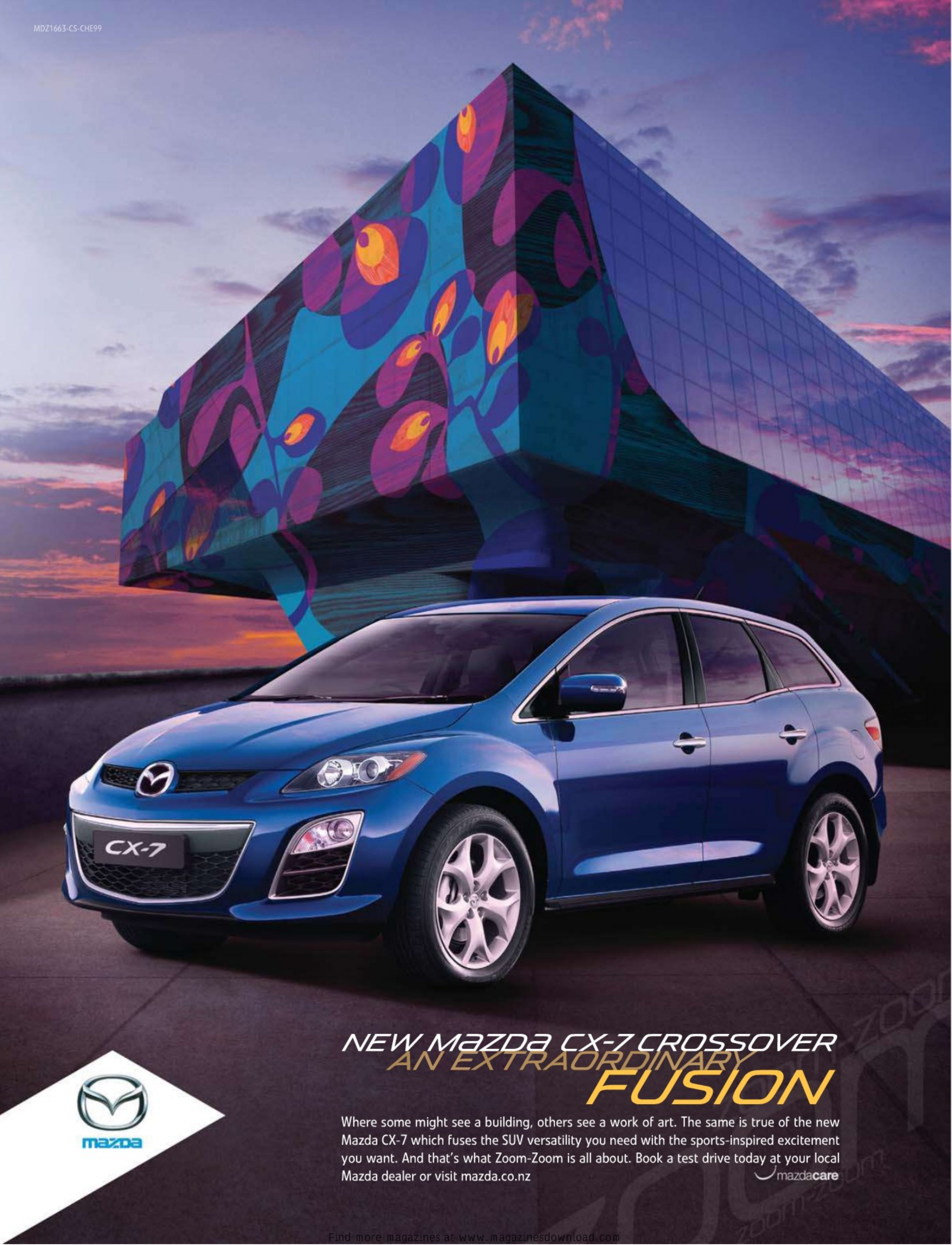

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people in the issue

ANSON SMART

Anson Smart found his heart in San Francisco, at the College of Fine Arts, to be precise, where he refined his love of photography into a career that has taken him around the world and into the pages of *Cuisine*. Smart says it was the work of fabulous French fashion photographer Jeanloup Sieff that inspired him to get started. "It gave me a way to capture the things that excited me." Smart returned to his native Australia, which is where he photographed renowned Sydney-based Kiwi chef Justin North for this issue. Before photography, Smart had taken a childhood fascination with the fly-boy glamour of *Top Gun* all the way to an aviation science degree. Ironically, he now spends a lot of time in the air, travelling to locations from the Himalayas – he recently spent six weeks crossing India, staying in converted palaces and eating like a prince for a food/travel book – to Morocco.

KATHY SNOWBALL

MARK LOGAN

Food writer Kathy Snowball divides her time between Sydney, where she teaches at the Seafood School, and her home in Orange, central western New South Wales. When she's not out on the ride-on mower, feeding the chooks or tending her garden, she writes and edits a monthly food and wine supplement for the local paper. A relative newcomer to country living, Kathy's life has taken on a new dimension. One of her great joys is growing her own vegetables and cooking them straight from the garden or, at least, attempting to grow them. There have been several disasters (empty ears of corn, cabbages full of caterpillars, mouldy peas), but these have been outweighed by the delight of digging her first potatoes and making chutney from her own tomatoes. You will find her enticing main-course salads on page 112.

JASON LOUCAS

For Jason Loucas it started when he was 12 and he begged his parents for a camera. "They bought it for me and I am lucky enough now to be doing what I love every day." With a Greek Cypriot heritage and a childhood spent in the cultural cornucopia of Melbourne, a passion for a rich diversity of art, image and form was a given. You can certainly see it in his home, where a remarkable collection of Australian art and vintage 1950s Scandinavian furniture is on display. The proud Australian photographed compatriot Kathy Snowball for this issue, but his craft has taken him far afield indeed, including to his favourite city to visit, New York: "Regardless of what I am doing it is always very inspirational." Jason, who one day hopes to have more time to devote to his painting, is also keen to pass on to his three children the cooking and vegetable gardening skills of his Greek ancestors.

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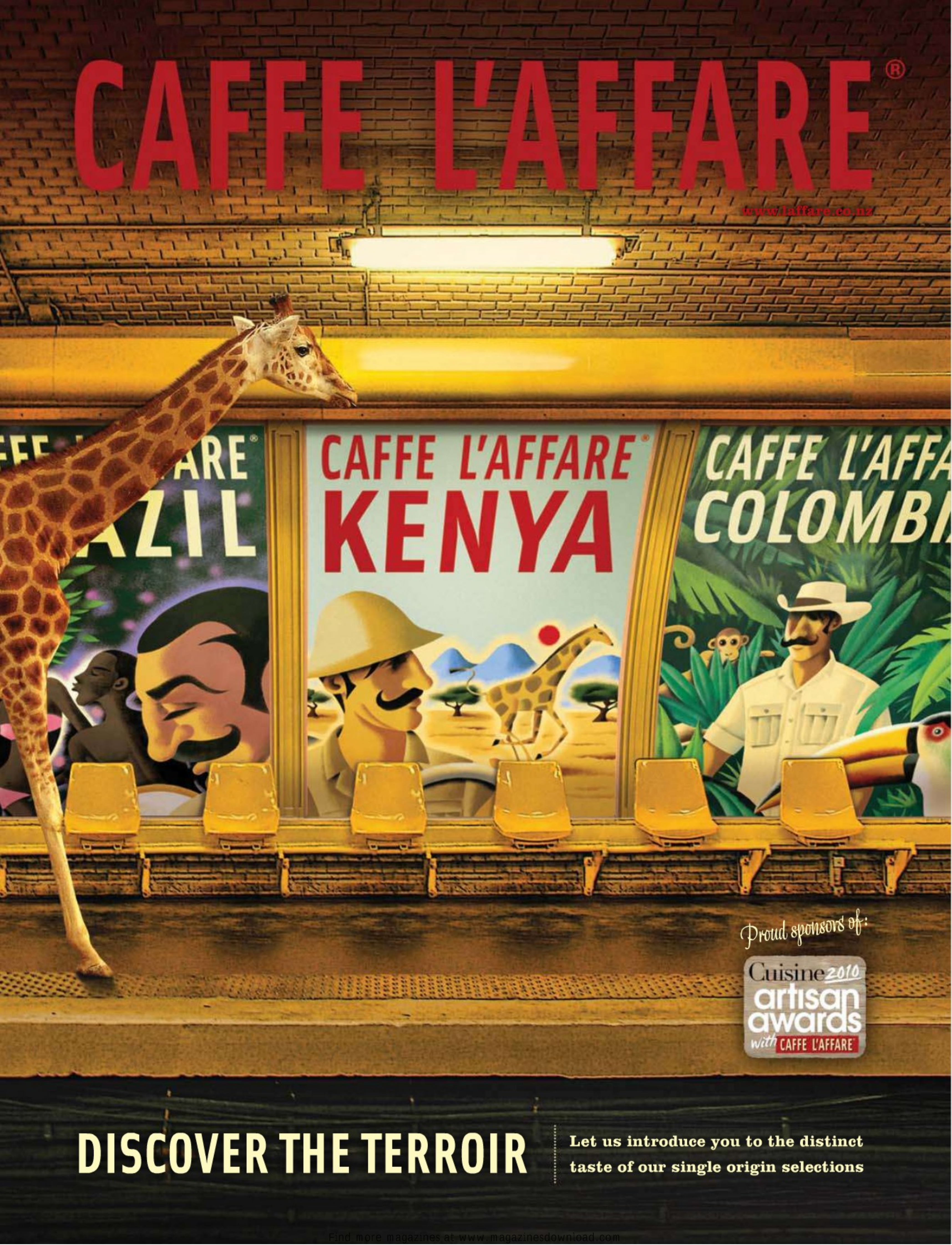

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Winning letter

Lorraine and **Neil Chave** win a case of Surveyor Thomson Single Vineyard Pinot Noir 2006 (see below).

■ One night, as I lay in bed trawling through my favourite sections of the newly arrived *Cuisine*, I came across "Age Fright" by Ralph Kyte-Powell (issue 137). As well as agreeing with the tenor of his column, it was a delight to come across a reference to Jean-Louis Chave and his fine Hermitage.

Jean-Louis learned his winemaking philosophy from his father, Gerard, and he from his father, a process that has been going on for more than 400 years. You may be interested to know that Chaves are living all over New Zealand.

My sister-in-law, a Chave, is married to a member of the Swiss winemaking family Hefti – their winery, Cashmere Hills Estate, produced award-winning Pinot Noirs; our daughter, Virginia, studied viticulture and oenology at Lincoln and was a winemaker before making a mid-life career change, to follow a childhood ambition and join the police. But, neither my husband nor I, sadly, are involved in the industry – we just enjoy its product.

To that end, we have sourced some of the Chave wines from France, at great expense I may add, but, to be honest, we infinitely prefer Pinot Noir, especially from New Zealand.

Lorraine and Neil Chave, Taupo

■ I recently bought *Go Fish* by Al Brown for my brother as a Christmas present. It is such a beautiful book – a work of art in itself – with all its extra features like the rolling fish inside the cover, the embossed cover itself and the species printed inside the jacket flap. The photos are fantastic and I haven't read such a nice cookbook in a long time.

So I am keeping this copy for myself and buying two extra copies for my brother and my husband's sister. It is the perfect book for at home or at the bach and such a fabulous gift.

Please pass on my congratulations to Al Brown and thank him for solving my most difficult Christmas purchases.

Belinda Thomas, via email

■ I suspect this letter won't win me the prize, nor perhaps many friends, but sometimes things have to be said.

On my letterbox is displayed a notice "No Junk Mail". It is a great pity that the bi-monthly receipt of an otherwise excellent magazine such as *Cuisine* is spoiled by the junk mail that invariably accompanies it.

I really, really, do not want coffee samples, wine advertisements and other such junk. I appreciate you may need advertising revenue, but "No Junk Mail" means just that, and I am surprised you believe slipping junk in "through the back door", as it were, is acceptable.

Also, flipping through the pages is made more difficult by several different thicknesses of paper – even cardboard.

Lionel B Frost, via email

■ I'm a mum who is privileged enough to be able to stay home with my children. Having gone down to one wage, my magazine consumption has been slashed. However, I could not take my beloved *Cuisine* out of the shopping trolley. This is a magazine to spend your last cent on.

After reading John Saker's advice on removing red wine stains (issue 136), I thought I'd add my two cents' worth. We got a whole bottle of red wine out of a near-white carpet using a wise aunt's method. We poured boiling water from shoulder height on to the stain, then covered it with towels and jumped up and down on them.

I have used this method on different carpets and had success every time. (This doesn't work if the stain has dried; it must be done immediately when the wine has been spilt.)

Carmen Sim, via email

■ I let my *Cuisine* subscription lapse. But recently at the supermarket my hands, of their own accord, added the September issue to my trolley – with such a beautiful cover, how could anyone resist?

From front to back, it had everything I needed and wanted, and I've set aside this weekend to make the two recipes from "At Your Request" – one of my favourite columns. And come spring I'm off to Pegasus Bay to try the winery restaurant's salivating menu.

So congratulations. You've lured me into resubscribing and not just for one year. I'm taking a two-year subscription so I won't be disappointed by missing a few copies.

Jan Reed, Rangiora ●

■ Due to space restrictions, all these letters have been abridged.

Salut!

AN OTAGO HOMAGE TO BURGUNDY

Connections to Burgundy run deep in Central Otago, where the striking Surveyor Thomson Single Vineyard Pinot Noir is crafted. Surveyor Thomson owners David Hall-Jones and his wife, Pui Mun Chan, hold a deep affection for Burgundy – they own a house there – and its great grape, Pinot Noir. Using fruit only from their 14-hectare plot in Central Otago, they have created a personal piece of Pinot magic, with the help of winemaker Dean Shaw, who himself has worked on many a Burgundy vintage.

For further information visit surveyorthomson.co.nz

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LOST AT SEA

FOR A LONG TIME, NEW ZEALANDERS HAVE HAD THE LUXURY OF DISREGARDING ANY FISH THAT DID NOT YIELD A THICK, PERFECT FILLET.

But with iconic species such as groper, bluenose and snapper now often more expensive than fillet steak, and becoming overfished, it's time to explore the superb eating qualities of lesser-known fish.

Like pilchards, for instance. In Japan, pilchards are valued for good, cheap sashimi, sold by street vendors who fillet them in front of customers' houses. Greg Bishop of Leigh Fisheries – who, in partnership with a Whangarei processor is New Zealand's only supplier of pilchards, commonly known as sardines – says they also have a high concentration of omega-3. And yet, 99.9 per cent>

KIERAN SCOTT

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> of our pilchard resource gets turned into fish bait. (See note below.)

The same goes for our scorpionfish – the despised scarpie (or grandaddy hapuku, sea perch) scornfully thrown back by Kiwi recreational fishermen, who are probably unaware they would be paying a fortune for this barbed orange beauty in Marseille.

It is nearly identical to the celebrated Mediterranean rascasse, considered essential to a pukka bouillabaisse.

Porae, another lesser-known species, might easily be mistaken for snapper when you eat it, which is why it is sometimes sold as "silver snapper". It is also known as "emperor tarakihi", though it is slightly darker.

Suffering from its reputation as a bony fish, gurnard is sold very cheaply. Yet tweezer out the line of bones after you've fried the fillet and you'll be repaid with delicious creamy flesh.

Cheaper still are skate wings, which everyone should buy on sight. They need to be fresh, as they develop an ammoniac smell after a few days, and the skin must be peeled off before cooking. Gordon Ramsay serves them in his UK restaurants for their delicious flavour and wonderfully dense, scallop-like texture.

Warehou is a dense, meaty fish that can be absolutely delicious, but has garnered a poor reputation through too often being overcooked, which turns the flesh dry and stringy.

Prized in Europe for its dense texture is monkfish, which seems to be catching on in New Zealand, as reflected in its steadily rising price.

Another rising star is alfonsino, which looks like orange roughy but is not a deep-sea species. Meaty like bluenose, it has a relatively high oil content. "It's the new trendy fish," says Mike Towner, assistant auction manager at Auckland Fish Market.

We could do with even more of those. **DAVID BURTON**

The New Zealand Seafood Council has made it easier for explorers of new piscine species by printing a special wallet card with omega-3 content and suggested cooking methods for all the species mentioned here (except the poor, hated scarpie) and many more. Download from greatestmeal.co.nz

Pilchards/sardines are rarely found in retail outlets. **To order fresh ones, ph: Yellow Brick Road on 04-801 8158.**

LA CASA TOSCANA EXTRA VIRGIN MANZANILLO OLIVE OIL WAS DECLARED BEST IN SHOW AT THIS YEAR'S NZ OLIVE OIL AWARDS. FOR MORE GOOD OIL, SEE PAGE 154.

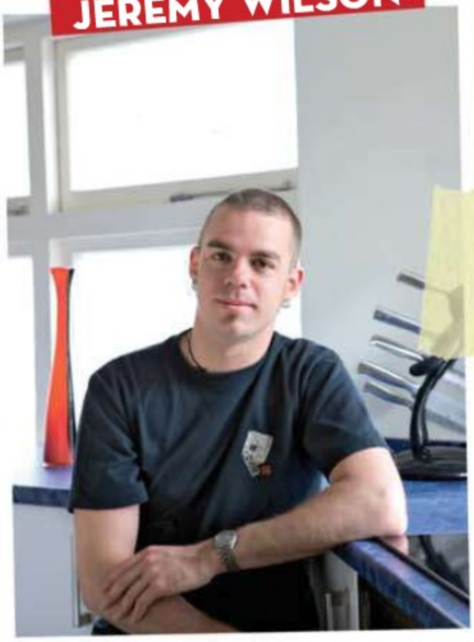
KIERAN SCOTT

DOG POINT AFTERNOON

The Dog Point/Logan Brown picnic will be held in Marlborough on Saturday 13 March 2010. The boys from Logan Brown will oversee the food to be enjoyed at a classic Kiwi picnic accompanied by Dog Point wines as well as a special vinous treat. So, wine and food lovers, for details contact info@dogpoint.co.nz or phone the winery on 03-572 8294. Numbers are limited.

See Al Brown's picnic feature on page 68.

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL
JEREMY WILSON



NICOLA EDMONDS

AS THE OWNER AND SUSHI MASTER of Wellington's Shinobi Sushi Lounge, it should come as no surprise that Jeremy Wilson does not prepare fish on his day off. However, such is his dedication to his craft that he cooks Japanese even at home.

While he might sear and make thin tataki-style slices with the feral venison a hunter friend regularly sends him from Fiordland, his perennial favourite is kakuni – braised pork belly – a recipe he learnt working in a noodle shop in Japan. A piece of pork belly is simmered in water with a leek and brown rice for three hours, then braised a further hour with soy sauce, sake, sugar, garlic, ginger, chilli and water. Reduced and thickened, this liquid becomes the sauce.

Jeremy worked in the noodle shop to pay his way through eight months of intensive sushi training in Japan. Fluent in Japanese since spending a year there as an exchange student aged 17, he had wheedled his way around Yamato's sushi shops until he found a sympathetic master willing to take him on.

Some years earlier, as a music student at Massey University, he had paid for his tuition by mixing cocktails at the legendary Wellington bar Tsunami Sushi, achieving local notoriety for his bacon-infused vodka and finding brief national celebrity as winner of the 2004 National Cocktail Championships.

After relaunching Tsunami Sushi as Shinobi Sushi earlier this year, he now combines his two-fold skills by making a Californian-style Green Room sushi roll, then counteracting its richness with a sour, salty margarita. **DAVID BURTON**

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crema of the crop

KEN DOWNIE

Café culture has come a long way in this country in the past 20 years – which is about how long Mike Allpress has been roasting coffee in Auckland. Though the former chef's dalliance with coffee extends further – he was experimenting with caffe lattes when he was about 10 years old.

Allpress Coffee has mainly been a supplier of restaurants and cafés, though its Caffetteria Allpress, behind Victoria Market has, along with the coffee, some of the best sandwiches in Auckland.

The most recent venture is a retail store, planted in the centre of the Ponsonby café strip, selling single-origin coffee for customers to take home and brew themselves. And not necessarily with the shiny new espresso machine.

"There's been a big move to buying espresso machines, but there's a better way to drink coffee at home," says Allpress – the unique flavours of these coffees, he says, are best expressed with a drip-filter brew pot.

The store, designed by Allpress, recently won a gold award for Retail Environment in the Best Design Awards of the Designers Institute of New Zealand. The narrow space was halved by the kitchen put in to produce their own biscuits, under the Biscotto brand, such as almond ricciarelli, Moorish lemon and cardamom, and cantucci.

And if you want to wake up and smell the coffee, Allpress offers classes in tasting and brewing. **TONI MASON**

allpressespresso.com

CHOC TREATMENT

Chocolate-coated nuts can't get better than this. Cudié Catànies are caramelised Marcona almonds coated in rich, creamy praline made to a secret recipe of the Barcelona family who creates them, then dusted in cocoa. In full mouth-filling size and a mini version. Scorched almonds will never look the same again.

JASON CREAGHAN

BIG cheese

Judging is under way for the 2009 Kapiti Chef Collection. More than 40 restaurants throughout the country have prepared recipes that include a Kapiti Cheese as a key ingredient. The Supreme Winner and finalists will be announced in the next issue of *Cuisine*. See kapiticollection.co.nz

WE FANCY

- The Moritz family relaunched the legendary Barcelona brand and its sunny-natured brew in 2004. Now imported here. See stvincentscave.com
- Toasted Espresso in Auckland's High St – a small, perfectly formed café that's big on delivery.
- The Dilmah t tea shop at Ballantyne's store in Christchurch – is there anything as pleasantly soothing as delicate cakes, tiny sandwiches and fine teas served in genteel surroundings?

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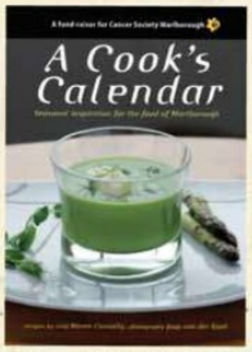
FISH & QUIPS

Inspired by the fish skeleton imprinted on the inside cover of his new cookbook, *Go Fish*, Al Brown has created a series of limited-edition T-shirts in collaboration with graphic designer Gary Stewart, who also designed his book, and illustrator Blair Sayer. Available online at albrown.co.nz and at Wellington's Hurricane Jeans and Miss Wong.



Maree Connolly, chef at Hotel d'Urville Brasserie, aimed "A Cook's Calendar" at the everyday cook to raise funds for the Cancer Society Marlborough. Recipes follow the seasons using the region's abundant produce. At $20, it's an ideal gift. Ph: 03-579 4379 or email hilaryg@cancersoc.org.nz

Josh Emett at Amisfield
Amisfield Bistro, Lake Hayes

Five-course dégustation lunch by Josh Emett, Kiwi executive chef for Gordon Ramsay's New York and West Hollywood restaurants, matched with Amisfield wines. Ph: 03-442 0556, amisfield.co.nz

February 9

PHOTOLIBRARY

take 5 WAYS WITH CUCUMBER

SANDWICHES With a light spread of butter, some dill, maybe cream cheese, maybe smoked salmon. Salt and pepper.

SALAD Thinly slice cucumber and add a dressing of vinegar, sugar, salt and pepper.

PIMMS Cucumber slices are an essential ingredient to the perfect Pimms cup, along with ginger ale, lemonade or soda, and some mint.

TZATZIKI A cooling dip that's easy to make – mix grated seeded cucumber with good plain yoghurt and a crushed clove of garlic, and season with lemon zest and juice, and salt and pepper.

SAUTÉ Lightly sauté chunks of peeled and seeded cucumber in a bit of butter, add some soft herbs and a bit of lemon. Especially nice with chicken or fish.

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RAISING THE BAR

Combine organic cucumber vodka, lime juice, ginger beer, fresh cucumber, basil and a hint of wasabi and you have the perfect method for slicing into summer humidity. Devised by Tim Martin of Auckland's Mea Culpa, it goes under the name of **Kappa Gari** (Kappa is a scurrilous mystical Japanese creature that only eats cucumber... and maybe a few children). The vodka, made by environmentally conscious California artisan producer Square One (and just arrived in New Zealand), is made from organic rye and bears a non-paper label. Served in a discerning bar near you.

KEN DOWNIE

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SYDNEY'S BIG SHOW

FIONA SMITH GOES CRAVING MAD

KEN DOWNIE

pop up Portugal

I n October, I went to Sydney for a long weekend and encountered a side to the city I had never seen before – the month-long annual **Crave Sydney** festival. Dedicated to food, art and fun, Crave draws the curtain on the city's best secrets.

BREAKFAST ON THE BRIDGE

Some 190,000 people had entered the ballot for the chance to picnic on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Six thousand made it on to the freshly laid kikuyu grass at 6.30am for the huge breakfast picnic, strolling past apple trees and grazing cows, and being entertained by local musicians. Regional producers handed out provisions such as bread, jam, yoghurt and fruit. What a way to start the day.

FISH & TIPS

Throughout the month, chefs and artisan producers take participants behind the scenes. We spent an early morning at the fish market with chefs Justin North (Bécasse and Etch) and Matthew Kemp (Balzac). They took us on to the auction floor where they talked about the kinds of fish on offer, sustainability and why and how they select. I got some great recipe tips for the more unusual varieties.

NIGHT NOODLE MARKET

For two weeks, Hyde Park morphs into Singapore's Newton Circus. An amazing selection of Asian food from around Sydney brings the throngs out to eat and catch up with friends. Every stall serves something tempting and the queues stretch for miles.

One-off dinners with unusual themes in unexpected places around Sydney have been happening for a while. For Crave, we went to a Portuguese banquet in a Rozelle warehouse, the venue a secret until the day before. By day the venue is home to 35 artist studios, but this night it was transformed with a long banqueting table. Chef Fatima Barroso, a pioneer in introducing Portuguese food to Australia, provided classics with plenty of modern twists. The evening ended with crisp and creamy custard tarts. Bliss.

CUISINE FOR KIDS

One project ditched separate kids' menus and offered all the adult fare at kid prices and portion sizes. The early evening set menu was $45 for adults and $15 for children. The idea was to get families eating out together in restaurants. At Danks Street Depot it proved so successful the project was extended over the entire month. **eventssydney.com**

The next Crave Sydney will be October 2010. Fiona Smith & Ken Downie were hosted by NSW Tourism.

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deep-fried summer

RALPH KYTE-POWELL TAKES A BATTERING AT THE BEACH

Growing up in Australia, summer had a few constant themes for me. Sunburn was one. So were girls in bikinis, who were totally uninterested in me, no matter how charming, witty and athletic I tried to be. For music there was AC/DC and other great Aussie groups like Split Enz, Dragon and The La De Das.

Another constant was my envy of the guys cruising around in soft-top sports cars and the girls they effortlessly befriended. I dreamed of joining the cool crowd and romancing those bikini-clad girls while driving a sports car.

And the food we ate at the seaside always seemed to be deep-fried.

The logic of eating mouth-searing food in hot weather escapes me. We never had that triumph of British cuisine, the deep-fried, battered Mars bar, but we had our own peculiar deep-fried creations, as well as many that would be recognised around the Anglo-Saxon world of seaside gastronomy. Most are probably still available at a seaside resort near you.

Like "battered sav", a purple-coloured frankfurter filled with God knows what (sawdust?), in thick batter. Yum. There was also a "hamburger" deep-fried in batter. The delicacy known as "potato cakes" in Victoria, or "potato scallops" in New South Wales, were slices of potato dipped in the ubiquitous batter and given the same treatment. Dim sims and spring rolls filled out the menu, and of course there were chips – not the mean little fries of the modern multinational franchise, but good, solid thick chips. But the triumph of deep-fried seaside gastronomy was a national icon, the Chiko roll.

Often known, oddly, when I was young as a "chicken roll", despite it containing no chicken, the Chiko roll was like a large industrial-strength spring roll. But instead of the light, thin, crisp coating of that delicacy, the Chiko was like a linoleum floor tile rolled into a cylinder encasing shreds of cabbage, carrot and tiny morsels of minced meat. Deep-fried to its trademark golden yellow, it was a standard. Devised by a boilermaker from Bendigo in Victoria who thought he could improve on the flimsy Chinese-style spring rolls sold at an Aussie Rules match, the Chiko made its commercial début in Wagga Wagga in 1951 and it's still available across the country, especially at the seaside in summer. The museum in Wagga actually has a gold Chiko Roll on display to celebrate its cultural importance.

A Chiko roll was more accessible than my other great desire for summer indulgence, the car. For those who've never had one, a convertible always conjures up images of carefree summer days. My earliest memories of soft-top cars go right back to the days of black and white TV. Baby boomers, and maybe Gen Xers too, may remember defence attorney Perry Mason. Armed with nothing but his skill as an advocate and the dedication of his sidekicks, secretary Della Street and private dick Paul Drake, he saved the innocent from the dastardly District Attorney Hamilton Burger.

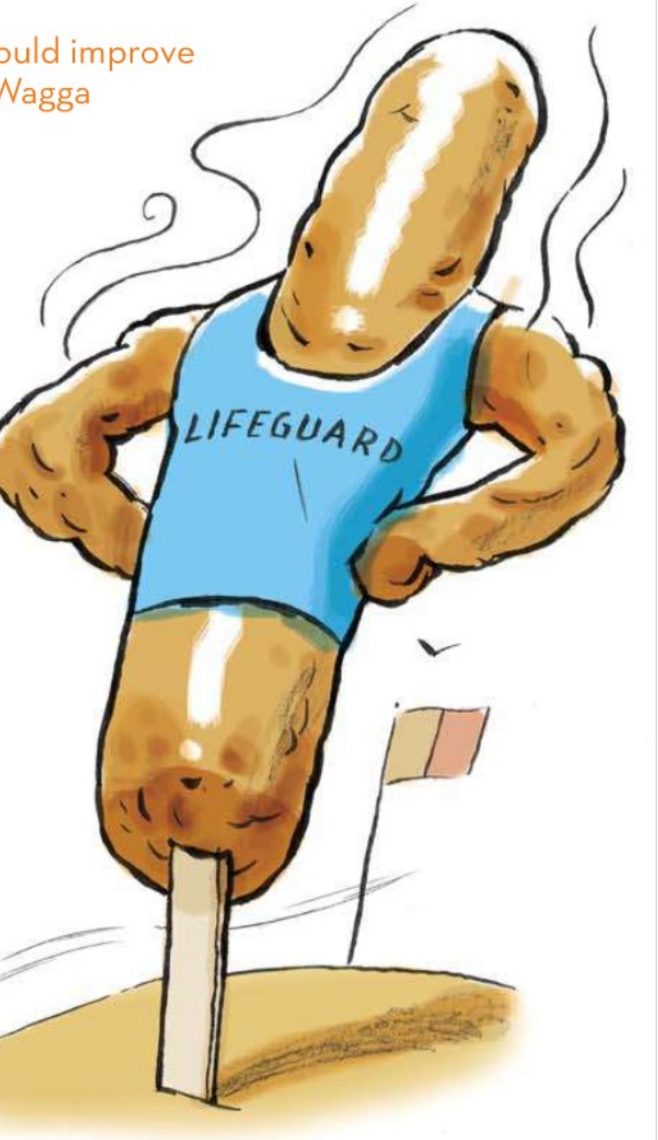
Perry's gang were all appealing characters, none more so than Drake. With his wavy fair hair glued back, he would cruise up in a vast Yank-tank convertible with the top down. One of Drake's hands would be on the steering wheel, elbow resting on the side, and in the other hand was a cigarette. From my perspective as a kid, he looked terribly old but, gee, he looked cool. From a vantage point in Antipodean suburbia, that convertible was an exotic piece of machinery. So, whenever I saw a convertible I would stare longingly at it, knowing I would never get my hands on one.

I was wrong. Years later, ironically when I was in circumstances that curtailed bikini studies, a soft-top came my way. My new wife's father had a red Jaguar E-Type V12 roadster, a gorgeously curvaceous vehicle that scored about 100/100 for pose value. My father-in-law was a generous man who readily lent the car to his new son-in-law. I had finally joined the in-crowd and I worked on the nonchalant, world-weary expression I deemed appropriate for someone of such obvious coolness. Those carefree days in a convertible that I'd longed for had arrived – but I was about to be disillusioned.

The Jag's interior was like a furnace in anything but the mildest weather. When the top was down, my sunburn graduated to new levels of pain. With the top up, the transmission tunnel between driver and passenger generated such heat, you couldn't touch it even with a trousered leg.

A cruise at the seaside on a summer's day was an exercise in endurance, like crossing the Sahara. We had to forgo those wonderful deep-fried Chiko rolls in favour of ice-creams and lemonade – anything to cool us down. How sad disillusionment can be.

Devised by a boilermaker from Bendigo who thought he could improve on flimsy spring rolls, the Chiko made its début in Wagga Wagga



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Clooney is the *Cuisine NZ Restaurant of the Year* 2009 Best Smart Dining Metropolitan runner-up.

KEN DOWNIE

AARON McLEAN

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Cuisine
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Auckland 1141

Entries must be received on or before 21 February 2010. The dinner must be held between the days of Sunday and Thursday in any week in March 2010.

CLOONEY
clooney.co.nz

SABATO
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AIR NEW ZEALAND
airnewzealand.co.nz

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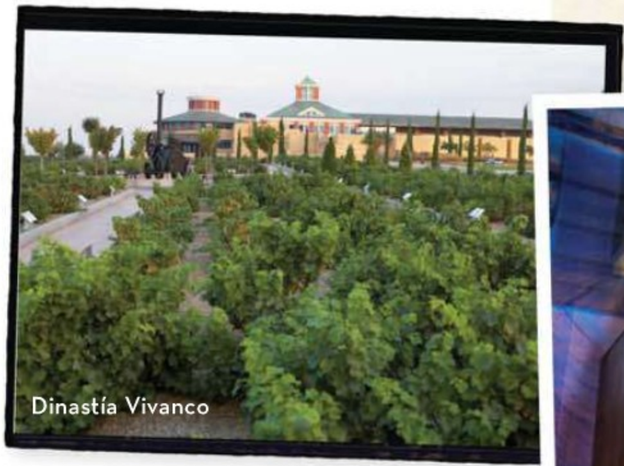
A RIOJA top ten

JANE ADAMS FINDS BEAUTY AND BOUNTY IN AN HISTORIC SPANISH VALLEY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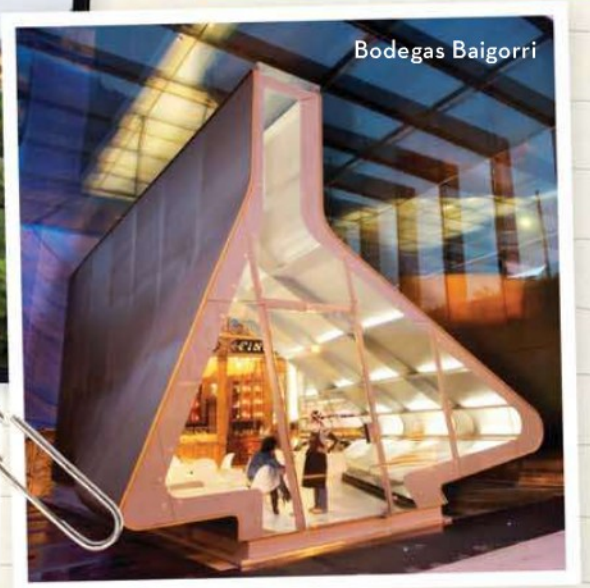
Bodegas Baigorri

Travel from Barcelona to Bilbao by autopista and you will find yourself surrounded by bulls. These giant, black, hilltop silhouettes (a vestige of a popular brandy campaign) are a fitting symbol of the might, pride and power of the fertile valley of La Rioja, Spain's best-known red wine region.

Closer to hand are vines, orchards and vegetables – all watered by the mighty Ebro river – and a panoply of dazzling winery architecture, vinotherapy spas and tables laden with thick white asparagus and gutsy rustic dishes like cordero asado (wood-roasted lamb) and orejas de cordero fritas, aka fried lamb's ears.

For information on all things Rioja try lariojaturismo.com

JAVIER LARREA/PHOTOLIBRARY

CASAS RURALES

Want the real Rioja? Rent a country house surrounded by vines and pick up all your daily culinary needs at Logroño's thriving indoor daily market (see next page).

ascarioja.es

DINASTÍA VIVANCO

The Vivanco family's wine museum – it pays to book – is an artful homage to all things vinous: Roman amphoras; old Riojan presses, vats, tractors and tools; multimedia installations; and the world's largest private collection of corkscrews (3000-plus!). The restaurant offers seasonal specialities with a modern twist, such as milk-fed lamb seared over vine cuttings, pimientos riojanos and braised veal cheeks.

Ph: 941-322 323, dinastiavivanco.com

HOTEL LOS AGUSTINOS

This 600-year-old erstwhile convent in the centre of the wine town of Haro has been artfully restored to incorporate a dramatic glass-vaulted cloister. Rooms from €96.

hotellosagustinos.com

LEZA RIVER GORGE

Barely mentioned in tourism brochures, this dramatic mini-Grand Canyon is now part of a Unesco biosphere >

VINI-TECTURE

Rioja's modernist winery architecture – led by the Gaudi-inspired Bodegas Ysios and Gehry's flamboyant Marqués de Riscal (see next page) – is arguably as great an attraction as the region's wines. EU funding has facilitated a phalanx of 21st-century structures: the decanter-like tasting pavilion by Pritzker prize-winner Zaha Hadid at López de Heredia; the muscular angles of Bodegas Darien; the subterranean Bodegas Baigorri, marked only by the glass-box reception; the hilltop Bodegas Regalía de Ollauri, near Briones; and the curvaceous concrete and jumbled cubes of Bodegas Antión, which mirror the Cantabrian landscape.

bodegasysios.com; bodegasregalia.es; bodegasbaigorri.com; darien.es; lopezdeheredia.com

GONZALO AZUMENDI / PHOTOLIBRARY

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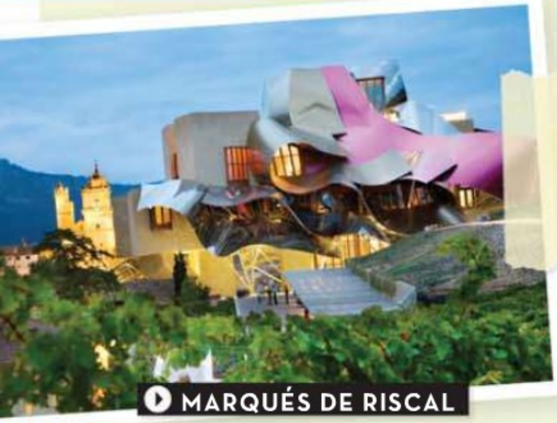

GONZALO AZUMENDI / PHOTOLIBRARY

MARQUÉS DE RISCAL

It's said lauded American architect Frank O Gehry, creator of the Guggenheim at Bilbao, took the commission for this winery hotel in the village of Elciego after succumbing to the house wine of his birth year, an enticement that led to this titanium-wrapped landmark. The arcing metal shimmers shades of vinous purple. There are 42 luxurious suites and a restaurant where Rioja's first Michelin-starred chef, Francis Paniego, whips up salt cod croquettes among other delights. hotel-marquesderiscal.com

reserve. Golden eagles soar above goat herds whose milk is used for queso de los cameros, a fresh white cheese that Francis Paniego uses in his levitational take on tarte Tatin at Bistro 1860 (see Marqués de Riscal). You can stay here, in one of the immaculately restored stone cottages in the hamlet of Velilla, with the goats' bells jangling around. **casasdevelilla.com**

LOGROÑO

The region's main town is the place to truly savour Rioja's bounty. First visit the market, with its milk-fed lamb, red peppers, spicy chorizo, plump white asparagus, artichokes, fresh white beans and cod chins. Then submit to a pinchos crawl in the old town – for elver (baby eel) fritters, liver in Pedro Ximénez, porcini and embuchados (aka fried goat tripe – an acquired taste). **logroturismo.org**

TEMPRANILLO & HARO

Spain's hero red grape has spearheaded the country's wine renaissance. Around Haro, the hub of Rioja Alta, the limestone soils of the Cantabrian foothills are home to such top labels as Muga, Roda, Ysios and Baigorri. Visits are offered in English but be warned: Rioja cellar-door etiquette requires pre-booking, and entry charges are typically not refunded if you stock up for tomorrow's picnic.

RIOJATREK

Daughter of a vigneron, Marina Grijalba operates an enotourism company that will happily tailor your vineyard explorations, including mini-treks between bodegas and meals. **riojatrek.com**

VINOTHERAPY

Canny scientists have decreed grape by-products excellent rejuvenators – for your skin. Pips, skins, pulp and oil are all used in revitalising preparations or cosmética del vino. Rioja's home brand is Nueva Antiqua in Logroño, but for top-tier pampering head to Elciego to the Caudalie Spa at the Marqués de Riscal where the day beds are flamenco red.
nuevaantiqua.com
caudalie.com

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in season
SUMMER SAVORY

Summer savory (*Satureja hortensis*) is a spicy, aromatic annual herb with a slight bitter note. Cooking mellows out the flavours and this is how it is usually used, added either at the beginning to permeate a whole dish or nearer the end to give fresh tones.

Closely related to winter savory (*Satureja montana*), it has a more delicate flavour and is often preferred by cooks in Europe, where it is widely used – as a component of *herbes de Provence* and on Bulgarian dinner tables as a third condiment.

Summery savory is also said to aid digestion. The Germans and Italians both value it in bean dishes (the German name Bohnenkraut means "bean herb") and with other légumes.

Try adding a sprig or two when cooking green beans or gently cook in butter before tossing in the cooked beans.

Add savory to roasting vegetables such as potatoes and beetroot.

Use the finely chopped leaves in stuffing for chicken or other white meat.

You will have to grow your own summer savory as it is not available in supermarkets or vegetable shops. Plant centres and seed catalogues are the places to look. **GINNY GRANT**

TRAFFIC

Auckland's SkyCity has high tea on the menu at Orbit (eclectic Kiwiana rather than posh) on weekends. And Bar Twentyone has been redesigned with Tom Skyring's signature lighting, copper-weave walls and what could be the coolest bathrooms in town.

The former king of pop chefs, Peter Chaplin has a new café in Auckland's Mt Roskill, Rock Café, after Musical Knives closed in 2003.

Huka Lodge has attracted one of Europe's rising stars, Michelin-starred Dutch chef Michel Louws to take over as executive chef. It should all be at least partly familiar, as Louws' Dutch restaurant was located lakeside in Zeeland.

Otago Farmers' Market in Dunedin now offers fresh, chilled game – venison, hare, rabbit and sometimes goat and pork – shot down south by Callum Hughes of Fare Game and processed by Bowmont Wholesale Meats in Invercargill. bowmontwholesalemeats.co.nz

Michael Coughlin has taken on Pier 24 at the new St Clair Beach Resort in Dunedin. He will offer his hallmark, fresh, simple-but-exquisitely-balanced food, sharing time between this venture and his acclaimed Bell Pepper Blues restaurant. See stclairbeachresort.com

After years as Treble Cone skifield manager, Jackie van der Voort has come down from the mountain to take on the historic Speargrass Inn at Fruitlands, near Alexandra. The smart café and restaurant with accommodation hosts a weekend farmers' market in summer. speargrassinn.co.nz

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the critic WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD

For five years, Frank Bruni tried desperately not to be noticed, dodging the gaze of the few savvy waiters and maître d's who recognised him as the *New York Times* restaurant reviewer.

But 44-year-old Bruni left his post at the *Times* last month, just as his memoir, *Born Round*, rolled off the presses. And he came out, so to speak, at the recent New York City Wine & Food Festival.

The event was a rare chance for New Yorkers to hear exactly what went into creating the reviews they so keenly read in the paper. Bruni, in a suit and open-collared shirt, admitted the work he did was, by its nature, imprecise: "Restaurant reviews are the most flawed reviews you can do. They're important, but totally, totally flawed."

Bruno was more precise, though, when it came to predicting the decline of fine dining: "We'll never abandon white tablecloths, but we won't have as many restaurants that speak that idiom. Diners don't care about it so much. We're living in a different world now."

KIRSTEN MATTHEW

MORE FM Winery Tour
Music legends Tim Finn, Bic Runga and Dave Dobbyn again take the stage together for the 2010 winery tour.
thewinerytour.co.nz

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ALEX OLIVEIRA

ROB HALL

SPICING UP THE BIG APPLE

Hosted by top chefs, the recent New York City Wine & Food Festival took over five blocks of the super-hip Meatpacking District in a culinary tour de force.

The festival was bookended by two unabashed pieces of Americana: Rachael Ray kicked it off with a Burger Bash, where for $US200 diners could dig into juicy burgers by chefs such as Michael Psilakis and Bobby Flay; while fellow Food Network regular Giada De Laurentiis hosted the closing Meatball Madness (also $US200) in which 48 chefs churned out bite-sized versions of their favourite meatballs. In between, Momofuku chef David Chang and "No Reservations" star Anthony Bourdain talked about the good and bad (expletives included) in the restaurant scene; Iron Chef star Masaharu Morimoto taught sushi construction (though, with his right arm in a cast, his deputies did the actual rolling); seafood fans met at the brand new Standard Hotel to guzzle fresh oysters; and many a carbon-mile was avoided at the locavore brunch. There were also classes in wine pairing and charcuterie. **KIRSTEN MATTHEW**

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WINE PEOPLE

SWORD PLAY

The younger Le Bruns, son Rémy and daughter Virginie, did the honours. Each held a bottle of their father Daniel's fabulous new sparkling rosé in one hand, a blade in the other to carry out the sabrage – the audacious method of opening champagne that originated in Napoleonic France. With deft strokes, Rémy and Virginie beheaded (cork, glass and all) their bottles and the No 1 Rosé was launched. **JOHN SAKER**

RECORD TIMES

Yalumba, the grande dame of the Barossa, has just celebrated an unprecedented 160 years of family ownership across six generations.

The journey never stops, with constant refinement and lessons learned from past economic cycles of peaks and troughs, says hands-on proprietor-vigneron, Robert Hill Smith, in New Zealand to address Huka Lodge's Big Red Dinner. "It pays to be grounded. We don't want to be the mad duck on the pond – looking serene but paddling like hell beneath the surface." **SUSAN BUCHANAN**

SILVER SHELL

Nautilus Estate of Marlborough, a Hill Smith family vineyard, is celebrating its silver (25th) anniversary. Since the 1985 inaugural vintage, which sold out, Nautilus has carved a reputation for wines of elegance and finesse. "1985 was also the first vintage for Cloudy Bay, so you could say it was the start of New Zealand wine's modern era," says Nautilus managing director, Clive Weston. "There's always a lot of hype about new kids on the block... let's see where they are in 25 years." **JOHN SAKER**

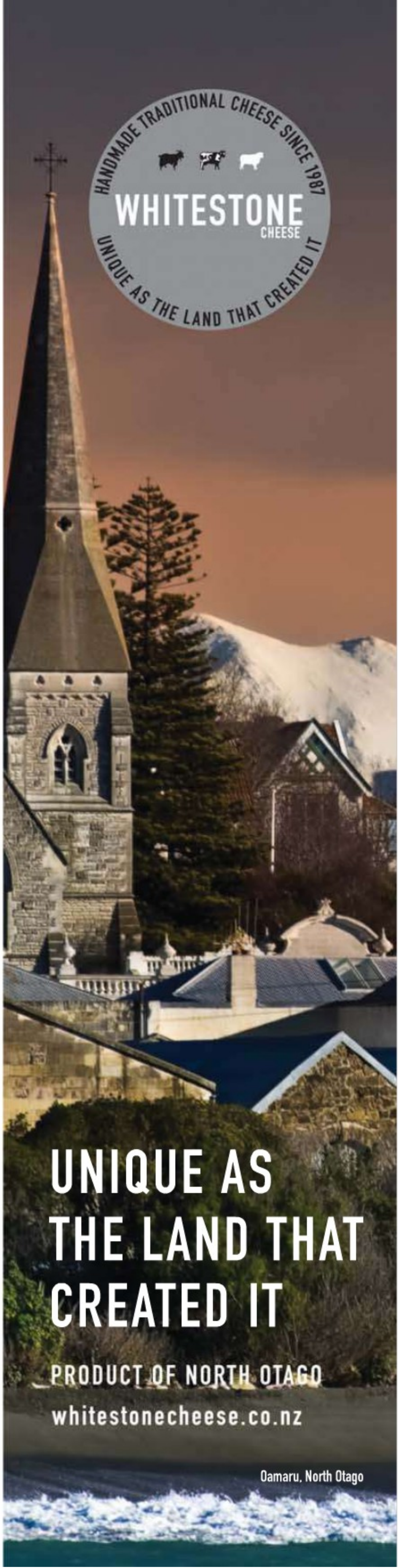
HER MAJESTY REINS IN

The Queen of Pinot is not abdicating outright, but Carol Bunn is leaving VinPro, the Central Otago contract winemaking facility where she has crafted so many fine Pinot Noirs. "It's due to personal reasons... I've achieved all I want at VinPro, my twin sister, Susan, has come down to Central and we'd like to do something together, I want more time to myself, I've just turned 40... it sounds like a mid-life crisis and probably is!" Not such a crisis as to have a few plans; Carol is keen to consult in the region and would also like to start her own label. **JOHN SAKER**

THE NEW MONTANA SHOWCASE SERIES SAUVIGNON GRIS 2009 IS NOT A BLEND OF SAUVIGNON BLANC AND PINOT GRIS, BUT A VARIETY IN ITS OWN RIGHT. A GRIS TO DIFFER...

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Favour, thorn, bastard and wrath: four words that Marlborough winemaker Brent Marris has attached to four of his swashbuckling ancestors, as well as to four new wines. Marris recently traced his family tree back to the de Mariscos, lairds of Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel in the 12th and 13th centuries, and has created a new label, Marisco Vineyards, in honour of the piratical clan. Each of the initial wines is themed around a mediaeval de Marisco brush with royalty. **SUSAN BUCHANAN**



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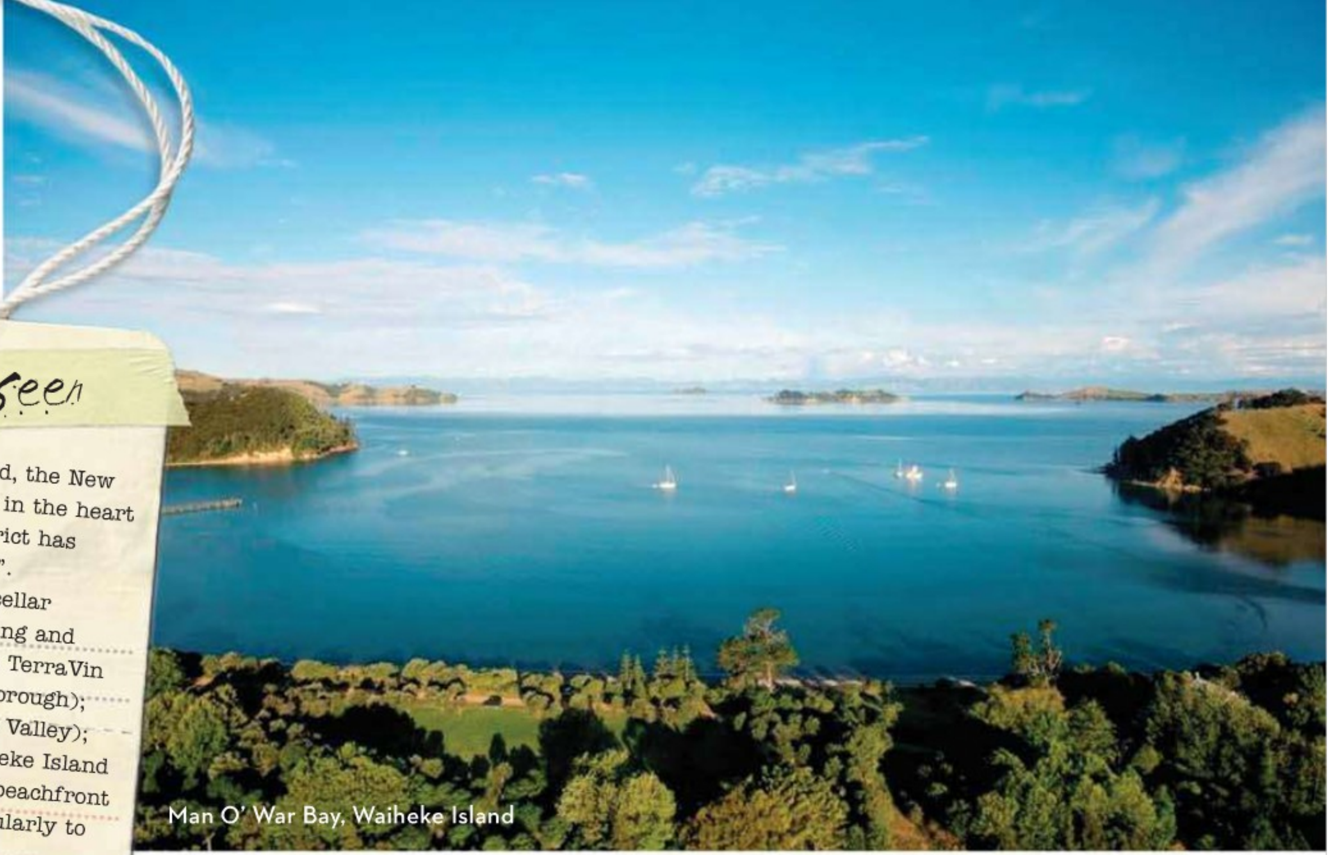

Man O' War Bay, Waiheke Island

Site seen

- Already a year old, the New Zealand Wine Centre in the heart of Napier's Deco district has become a "must visit".
- A quartet of new cellar doors is open for tasting and relaxing this summer: TerraVin and Auntsfield (Marlborough); Kurow Estate (Waitaki Valley); and Man O' War (Waiheke Island – a quirky, temporary beachfront outpost catering particularly to yachties in the bay).
- Point Wines, the hot little wine store at Auckland's Northcote Point, has just thrown out a wing – the Stafford Road Wine Bar.

"CUISINE'S 'HOT COLES' HEADLINE TOOK ON NEW MEANING AFTER OUR WINERY FIRE,"

SAYS BEN COLES OF WAIPARA'S THE CRATER RIM. THE PROCEEDS OF A NEW LABEL, FROM THE ASHES, WILL GO TO THE NORTH CANTERBURY VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE. "THOSE GUYS SAVED OUR 2009 WHITES."

tasteless REVIEWS

Something of a storm has brewed with the news that Australian wine writer, and Jamie Oliver's head of wine, Matt Skinner, reviews wines he hasn't tasted. The flaw was initially noticed by New Zealand wine writer Michael Cooper when a review copy of Skinner's book, *The Juice 2010*, arrived contained tasting notes on New Zealand wines not yet bottled.

Skinner admitted the practice, but said that he was writing "non-specific tasting notes based on the current and previous year's vintage". However, respected British wine publication *Decanter* countered by quoting Skinner in GQ magazine: "It's important to remember that every year is different and that no two years – even in the same spot – will ever be the same."

Skinner's publisher, Mitchell Beazley, said feedback from the first edition of *The Juice* showed that by the time people went out and bought it, "the wines were already off the shelves..." The solution seems to have been to review untasted vintages, putting a big question mark over the work of one of wine commentary's brightest new voices. **RALPH KYTE-POWELL**

The feel and design of "The New Zealand Wine Lover's Companion: An A-to-Z Guide" (Craig Potton Publishing, $29.99) convey a sense of worth backed up by the content. Karl du Fresne travels confidently and candidly across the world of wine from a New Zealand perspective. This worthy addition to our wine lexicon is a great gift for any vinophile. **JOHN SAKER**

2010 Wine calendar

JANUARY 2
Madame Rouge Vineyard Run, Waiheke Island
mirovineyard.co.nz

JANUARY 23
Meandering Vineyard Lunch
Ph: 0508-427 638,
croft.co.nz

JANUARY 30
Harvest Hawke's Bay Wine and Food Festival Roy's Hill, Hastings (new location)
harvesthawkesbay.co.nz

FEBRUARY 13
Marlborough Wine Festival
wine-marlborough.co.nz

MARCH 20
Dinner in the Cave
Mahi Wine, Marlborough
mahiwine.co.nz

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SHELF*life*

BOTTLE SAVER

Transporting wine in a suitcase has long been reliant on the "pack-and-pray" approach in the hope of avoiding a wine-marinated wardrobe at the other end. No more. The WineSkin bottle-shaped bubble-wrap bag seals hermetically and contains any accidental leakage. Find them at cellar doors, wine shops and duty-free outlets for $4-$5 each. wineskin.co.nz

PRESERVES YOU RIGHT

Due here soon, the Australian Wine Preserva is a remarkably simple way of staving off the oxidation occurring gradually when an open bottle of wine is unfinished. A plastic disc is inserted into the bottle after the first glass has been poured. It spreads over the wine surface, providing an oxygen barrier and moving down as each new glass is poured. brightidea.co.nz

JASON CREAGHAN

THE ICEBAGS COMETH

Now, these are cool... as will be your wine. These new wine icebags from France offer a snappy, casual means of keeping your summer drop at the right temperature. Available at gift shops ($9.95-$14.95) or from brightidea.co.nz **JOHN SAKER**

Wine Preserva; above: icebag, right: WineSkin

THE FERMENT

The second Marlborough Wine Weekend more than lived up to the first in spectacular wine, food and scenery. Marlborough sauvage also came through in Al Brown's food at the gourmet dinner at Timara Lodge – seafood with wild boar pie to follow.

For former stage child Misha Wilkinson (her mother was an opera singer), the show goes on. With labels reflecting Misha's background in the theatre, winemaker Olly Masters' The Gallery Gewurztraminer 2008, Limelight Riesling 2008, Dress Circle Pinot Gris 2009 and The High Note Pinot Noir 2008 impressed a receptive audience, as did the matching dishes from new chef at The Grove, Ben Bayly.

The world's first Maori wine producer, Tohu, has had an elegant brand makeover. Launched along with the winery's 2009 Sauvignon Blanc, the simpler, fresher labels feature a prominent koru.

FROM VEUVE WITH VERVE

The role of the cellar master of the great Champagne house Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin is significant. Since the first vintage in 1810, there have been only 10, each responsible for transferring the secrets essential to maintaining the house style.

The latest transition included a celebratory tour by new cellar master, Dominique Demarville, who brought to Melbourne prized and very impressive samples of historic Yellow Label non-vintage Champagnes from the Veuve Clicquot museum. My pick was the 1990 assemblage, a blend of the great 1990 vintage with elements of '89, '88 and '87. **RALPH KYTE-POWELL**

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NEW ZEALAND FOOD AND COOKERY

David Burton, Bateman $59.95 h/b

Cuisine feature writer, restaurant critic and author David Burton has here put together an exhaustive and inspiring reference work on New Zealand cuisine, a cultural strand he fiercely defends as much more than an extended series of borrowings and hybridisations from other food traditions.

In addition, the reader is treated to anecdote, culinary history and personal observations, all lightened with the authorial wit we expect from this writer. To his credit he offers no fewer than 13 recipes for kumara, that food of the gods, and critiques the (still often appalling but improving) selection of potatoes on the market. This book could easily change your shopping habits for the better.

Whether you wish to explore some of the obscure corners of our national cuisine, or simply revisit foods and ingredients familiar to us all, you need to buy this book. Information on and recipes for lesser-known fish species, explanations on the presence of such exotic tropicals as guavas, passionfruit, feijoas, tamarillos and kiwifruit in our diet, and how to make rewena – Maori bread – are but a tiny sample of the offerings ladled into Burton's much-expanded 1982 edition of this title, illustrated simply with black and white photographs and many line drawings of animal and plant species.

We should be grateful indeed that Burton's interest and commitment to meticulous research have again focused on what we gather, cook and eat.

JENNY MAIDMENT

THE VEGETARIAN OPTION

Simon Hopkinson, Quadrille, $65 h/b

Simon Hopkinson is one of the UK's great chefs and cookery writers and his *Roast Chicken and other Stories* remains one of my favourite cookbooks. Here, vegetarian food is given the star treatment, and without a whiff of spinach lasagne or nut loaf in sight.

For the most part these are simple recipes – a few main ingredients thoughtfully put together. Though there are restaurant-style dishes, too, such as the rich and luscious-sounding red pepper mousse, and asparagus custards with tarragon vinaigrette.

Each recipe has excellent notes and there are good sections on pulses, eggs, pasta and risotto. A few comforting puddings round out a delightful book.

GINNY GRANT

RÔTIS: ROASTS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK

Stéphane Reynaud, Murdoch Books, $59.99 h/b

This is another offering of Gallic charm from the author of *Pork & Sons*. But, curiously for a Frenchman, he opens with roast beef – something usually associated with English cuisine.

The chapters (arranged as days of the week) feature in turn: beef, chicken, veal, pork, fish (Friday naturally), lamb and roast game. (If you are groaning for greens after such a week, there is a small vegetable section.)

These delicious recipes range from simple to complex. I found a pressing need to cook from this mouth-watering book immediately. The instructions are clear and simple, and there are excellent sauce, stuffing and serving ideas, plus possibly the sweetest treasure of all – the quirkily named "little bonuses", in reality gorgeous recipes for leftovers.

GINNY GRANT

COCO

Phaidon $75 h/b

Coco is all a bit overwhelming at first, a compendium of treats from 100 of the world's leading contemporary chefs – including Kiwis Anna Hansen (The Modern Pantry, London) and Ben Shewry (Attica, Melbourne) – as chosen in turn by 10 "master chefs", including Ferran Adrià and Alain Ducasse.

Each chef has four pages devoted to their background, style and what impressed the masters, finishing with sample menus and recipes.

As a cookbook this would throw even the most proficient cook into a tailspin – these are mostly restaurant dishes, showing off what leading chefs are doing today, though some dishes are achievable at home.

It is fascinating, totally absorbing and you can pick it up wherever you fancy.

Look up the restaurants you've been to, or the ones you dream of eating at. Then be inspired by chefs you've never heard of. It's restaurant porn and you can keep it on the coffee table.

FIONA SMITH

THE SILVER SPOON FOR CHILDREN

Amanda Grant $29.95 h/b

Italy's most successful cookbook, *The Silver Spoon*, was released in English in 2005. This follow-up features a lovely collection of simple Italian recipes adapted to suit young cooks by English food writer Amanda Grant. The step-by-step explanations will make it easy for children as young as nine or 10, with a bit of kitchen experience, to follow relatively unsupervised.

I have a feeling this book might also appeal to more adult cooks looking for simple and delicious meal solutions. I was also drawn in by the wonderful, fun illustrations by Harriet Russell. Unfortunately, the food photographs are not so enticing, but they don't detract from the easy, fun feel.

One issue I had was the decision not to add salt to any of the recipes. A quick check of the original *Silver Spoon* sees that 10g of salt per litre of water when cooking pasta is recommended. To not put salt in the water (or in many other dishes) is an invitation to blandness.

But don't let that put you off. If you have a child interested in cooking, it is a great guide. Just use your initiative when it comes to seasoning. **FIONA SMITH**

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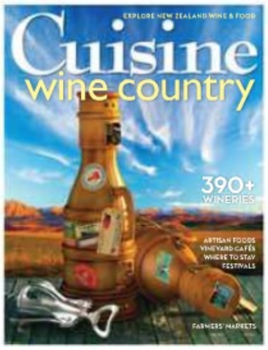

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Cuisine 2010 artisan awards with CAFFE L'AFFARE

JUDGING FOR THE CUISINE ARTISAN AWARDS 2010,

IN ASSOCIATION WITH CAFFE L'AFFARE, IS UNDER WAY, WITH ANOTHER IMPRESSIVE LINE-UP OF LOCAL ARTISAN PRODUCTS

The winners will be announced in the March issue of *Cuisine*, on sale 22 February 2010. And you will have the chance to sample the winners at the *Cuisine* Champions of Cheese CheeseFest 2010 on 3 March at the Langham Auckland (tickets are $30; to book go to nzsca.org.nz) and at specialty food stores around the country. Meanwhile, keep an eye out for the *Cuisine* Artisan Awards stickers on the 2009 winners. All so full of flavour and versatile, they turn the simplest recipe into a triumph. Try the Supreme Winner, Salumeria Fontana Sicilian Sweet Fennel Sausages, in the recipe on the opposite page, along with Uncle Joe's Walnut Spread, and Aromatics Wine Barrel-Smoked Mushrooms in the bruschetta recipe.

SMOKED MUSHROOM & CHÈVRE BRUSCHETTA WITH ASPARAGUS

The powerful flavour of smoked mushrooms adds a wow factor to many dishes, but can overpower other ingredients. I like to use chèvre to give a hint of creamy yet sharp cheese, but you don't need to use a flash one, and if you are not a goat's cheese fan, you can substitute cream cheese.

- **170g Aromatics Wine Barrel-Smoked Mushrooms**
- **100g chèvre goat's cheese (I used Ornelle)**
- **1 tablespoon verjuice or lemon juice**
- **½ loaf sourdough bread or 1 sourdough baguette**
- **20 spears asparagus, coarse ends trimmed**
- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **1 tablespoon lemon-infused extra virgin olive oil**

Place the mushrooms, chèvre and verjuice or lemon juice in a food processor and process to a coarse spread. Set aside.

Slice the sourdough into 1cm-thick slices.

Heat a grill pan or barbecue to hot and toast the bread on both sides until browned and crisp. If using a large loaf, cut slices into baguette-sized pieces.

Toss the asparagus with the olive oil and cook in the hot grill pan or barbecue for about 4 minutes until tender, turning once. Cut each spear in half and set aside.

Spread the toasts with the smoked mushroom and chèvre spread and top with two pieces of asparagus. Arrange on a serving platter and drizzle with the lemon-infused oil. Makes 20.

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SICILIAN SWEET FENNEL SAUSAGE SALAD WITH WALNUT VINAIGRETTE

- 750g waxy new potatoes
- 1 bulb fennel (about 175g), trimmed and fronds reserved
- 100g watercress, thick stalks discarded
- 80g radicchio, torn
- 600g (2 packs) Salumeria Fontana Sicilian Sweet Fennel Sausages

Boil the potatoes in salted water until tender. Drain, cool and cut into bite-sized pieces if necessary.

Slice the fennel very finely, using a mandoline if you have one. Arrange on a plate with the potatoes, watercress and radicchio.

Heat a frying pan to medium and fry the sausages for 10 minutes, turning occasionally, until golden. Slice on the diagonal into thick pieces and arrange over the salad.

Spoon the walnut vinaigrette over and scatter the reserved fennel fronds on top. Serves 6.

Walnut Vinaigrette

- 2 tablespoons Uncle Joe's Walnut Spread
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Combine the walnut spread, vinegar and sugar in a small bowl and season with salt and pepper. Whisk in 1 tablespoon of water then whisk in the extra virgin olive oil. •

THE JUDGES FOUND THE SWEET SICILIAN FENNEL SAUSAGES BEAUTIFULLY ELEGANT, SWEET AND FRESH, WITH GREAT FLAVOURS

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY FIONA SMITH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON McLEAN

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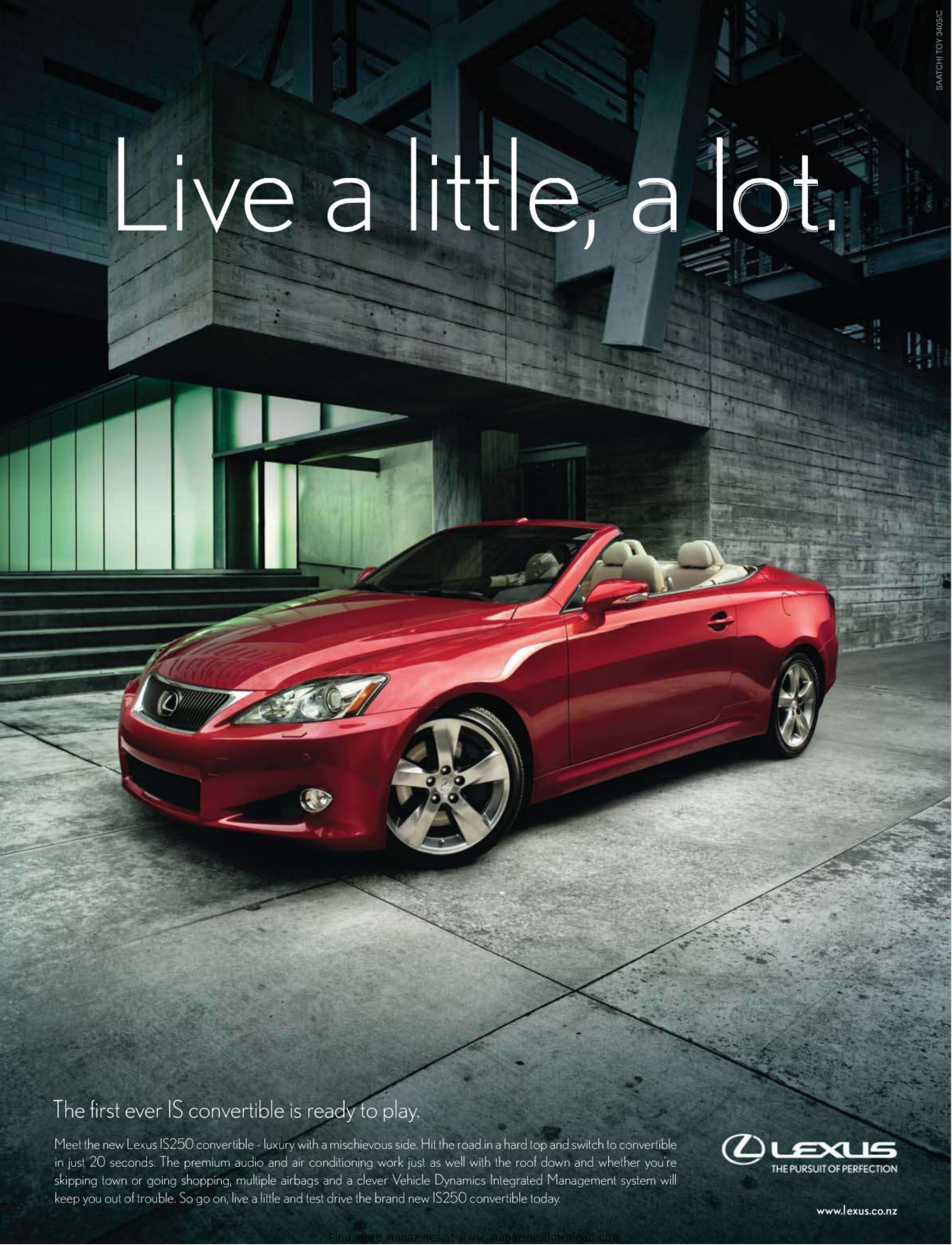

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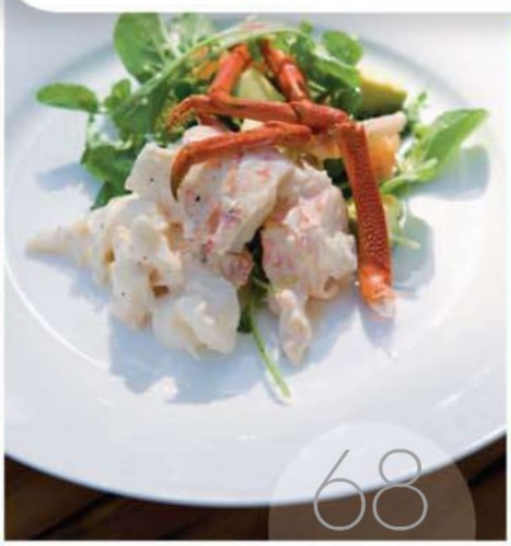

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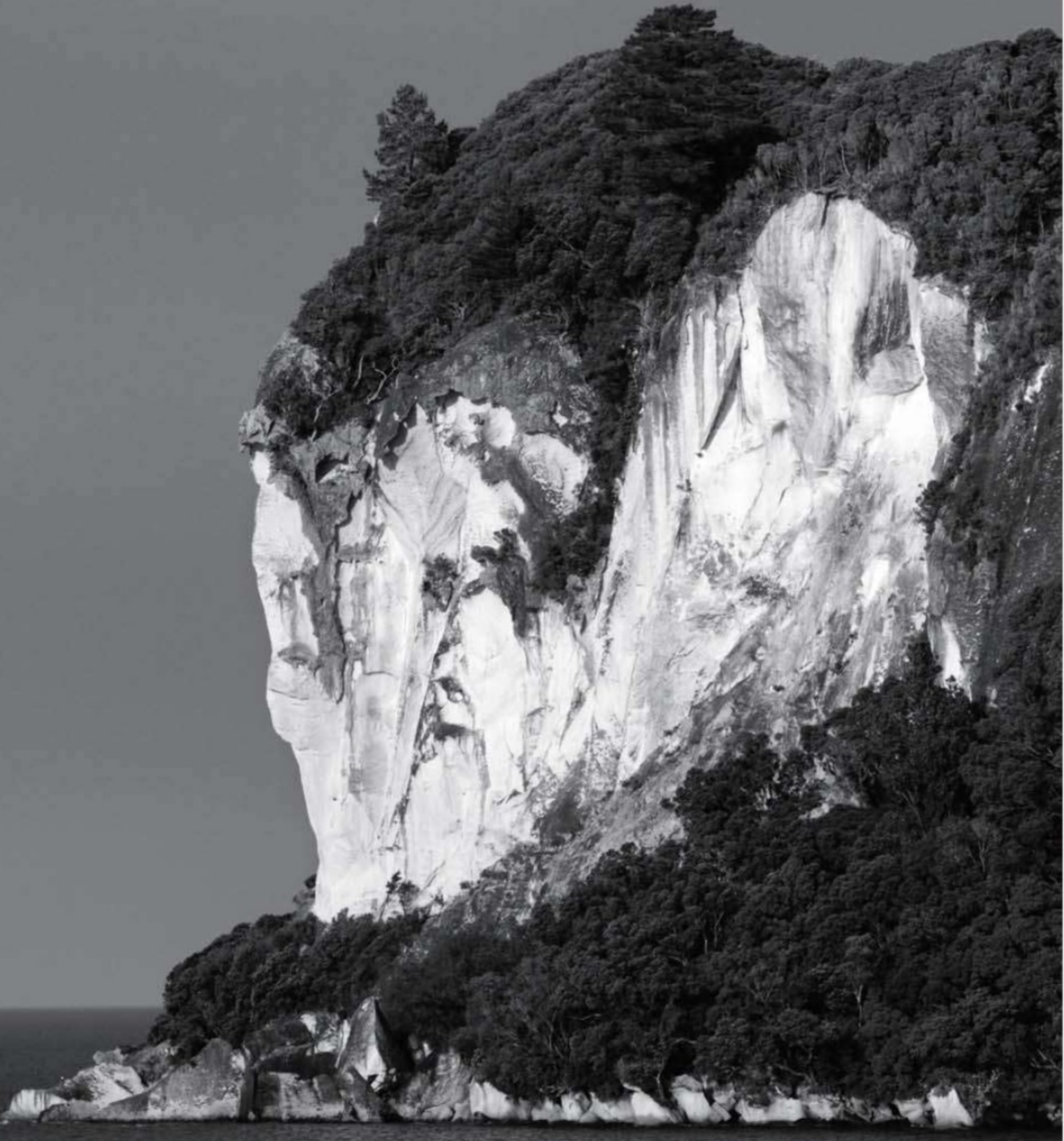
A good meal is something I enjoy cooking and something I enjoy being able to give my friends and family. There is nothing quite like taking your time over several delicious courses that you have put your heart and soul into. This is a special four-course meal that can be prepared in advance, something every well-organised cook likes to do. It can be served in a leisurely manner on a balmy afternoon or warm summer's night.

It is simple, light food with clear flavours that won't tax the palate in hot weather. It relies on fresh produce rather than complicated cooking techniques that transform ingredients. The aim of these dishes is to be more than the sum of their rather simple parts. Bon appétit!



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Henry James

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RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY RAY McVINNIE
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"The Division in the Kiwi Soul", *The Press* – Joe Bennett

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MUSHROOM & SPINACH PASTRIES
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ROCKET & WATERCRESS SOUP WITH SCALLOP DUMPLINGS
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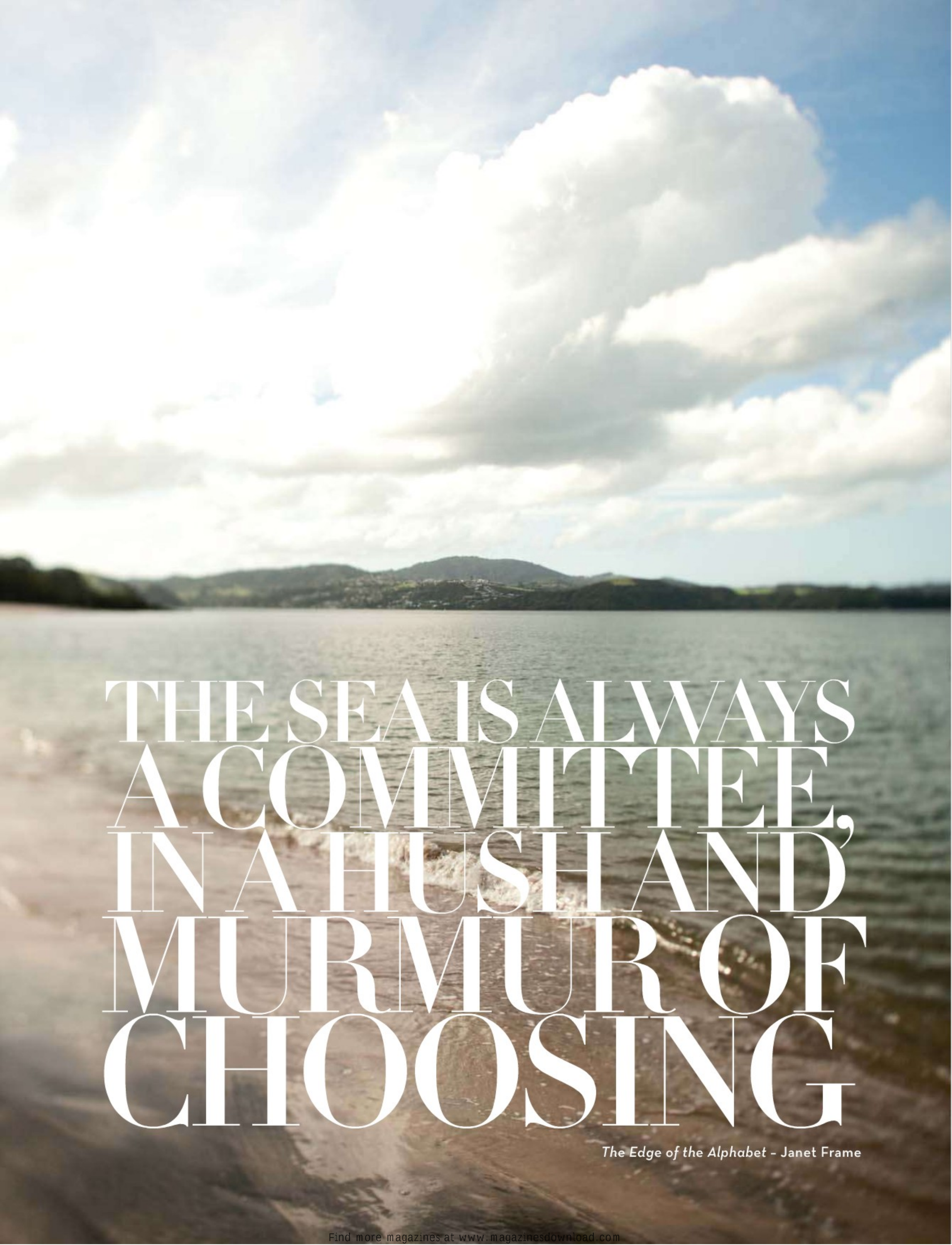

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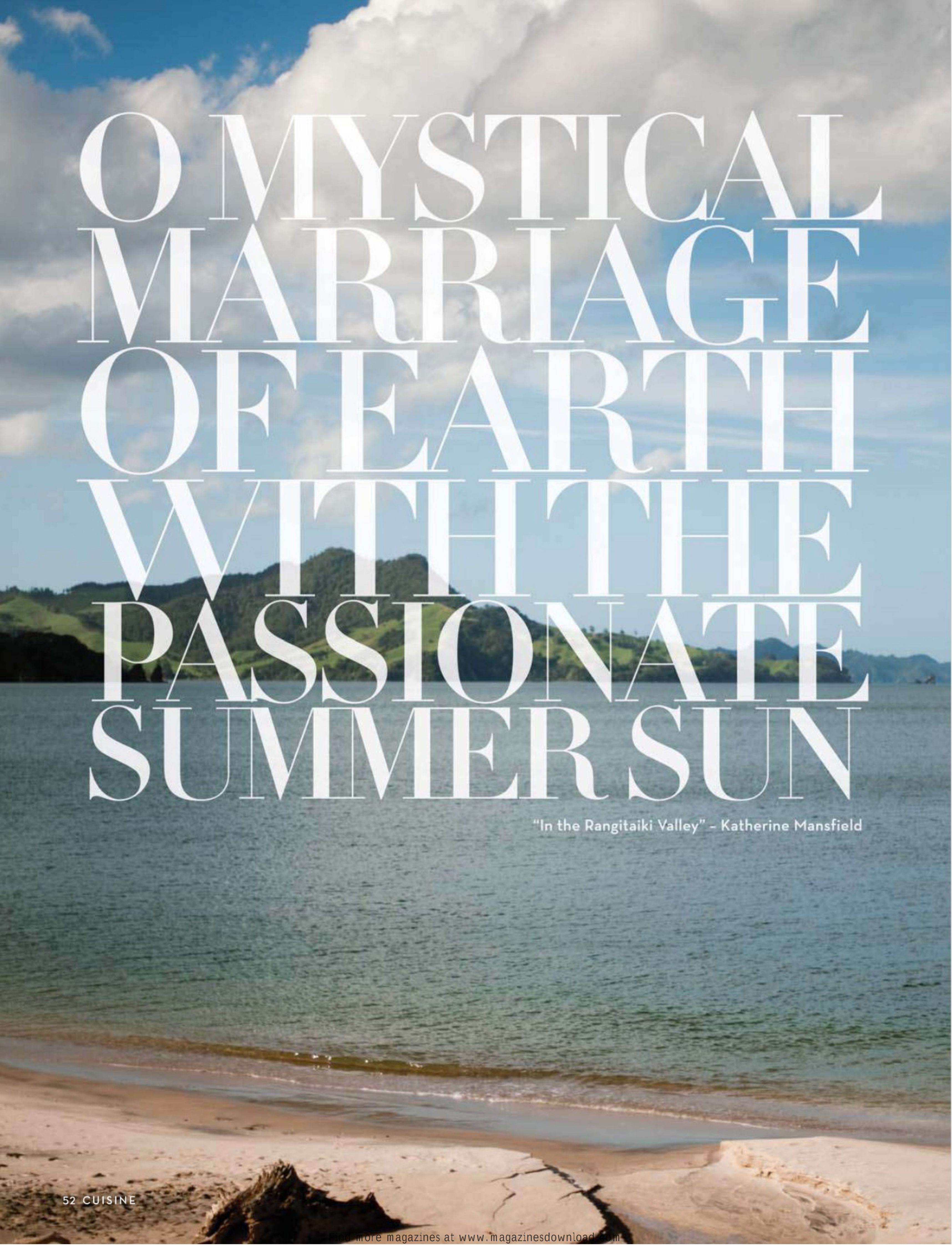

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ROAST CHICKEN WITH VEGETABLES & VERMOUTH & POTATO, ZUCCHINI & GOAT'S CHEESE GRATIN

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RHUBARB & STRAWBERRY SAVARINS WITH WHIPPED CREAM
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MUSHROOM & SPINACH PASTRIES

These are like small, hot flaky-pastry sandwiches filled with panfried button mushrooms, spinach, tarragon, chervil, toasted walnuts and crème fraîche. They make a tasty, rich start to a meal.

You can bake the pastry a few days in advance if desired. Store in an airtight container and reheat in a hot oven for a few minutes before filling.

- 400g flaky pastry
- 1 egg, beaten
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped tarragon leaves
- 250g button mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 1 large handful baby spinach leaves
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup toasted walnut pieces
- 200g crème fraîche

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Roll the pastry out on a floured surface and cut 6 x 10cm by 6cm rectangles of pastry. Place on a baking tray and brush the tops with beaten egg then refrigerate for 20 minutes.

Place the pastry in the oven and bake for 10-12 minutes until well cooked and well browned. Remove from the oven and cool, but keep the oven on for reheating. Split the pastries horizontally then put each back together.

Heat the oil in a frying pan over moderate heat. Add the tarragon and mushrooms. Cover and gently panfry for 10 minutes until the mushrooms are soft and starting to brown. Add the spinach, mix well, cover and cook for a minute or so until the spinach has just wilted. Taste and season.

Reheat the pastries and place the bottom halves on a serving platter or each on individual plates. Top each with some of the mushroom and spinach mixture. Sprinkle walnuts over and top with a spoonful of crème fraîche. Place the tops on the pastries and serve immediately. Serves 6.

ROCKET & WATERCRESS SOUP WITH SCALLOP DUMPLINGS

This light summer soup combines the tang of lemon and the richness of scallops. The dumplings are like little *boudins* or seafood sausages and can be prepared in advance and they can also be made simply from firm-skinned, boned white fish if desired. The soup can also be made in advance to the stage when you add the watercress and rocket, but don't add these until you are ready to serve as the bright green colour will be lost if it sits too long.

- 500g scallops
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 egg white
- 2 tablespoons chopped dill, plus extra for serving
- 1.2 litres chicken stock
- ¼ cup Italian risotto rice (I used Ferron carnaroli)
- finely diced peel of ½ preserved lemon
- 12 handfuls each watercress sprigs and rocket leaves
- juice of 1 large lemon

Put the scallops in a food processor with the salt and egg white, and process until smooth. Stir in the dill.

Bring a large wide saucepan of well-salted water to the boil.

Add tablespoonfuls of the scallop mixture to the gently boiling water and poach for 3-4 minutes until just cooked. Remove with a slotted spoon and cool. You will have about 24 dumplings. Cover and refrigerate.

Put the stock, rice and lemon peel in a saucepan, bring to the boil and simmer for 15-20 minutes until the rice is tender. Add the watercress and rocket, simmer for 30 seconds then purée with a wand blender or in a food processor. Place back on the heat and add the reserved dumplings. Bring to the boil by which time the dumplings will have reheated. Taste, season and add the lemon juice. Serve sprinkled with dill. Serves 6.

ROAST CHICKEN WITH VEGETABLES & VERMOUTH & POTATO, ZUCCHINI & GOAT'S CHEESE GRATIN

Opening out the chicken by removing the backbone speeds up the cooking of this almost one-pan meal. All it needs with it is the gratin, or plainly cooked potatoes if you prefer, and a green salad to follow.

- 3 large sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 12 baby carrots, well scrubbed
- 1 cup Kalamata or other good-quality black olives
- 8 shallots, peeled
- 2 bulbs fennel, coarse outer leaves removed, stalks cut off and bulbs halved, cored and sliced
- 1 large free-range chicken
- 250g cherry tomatoes
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 375ml dry vermouth
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup flat-leafed parsley sprigs

Preheat the oven to 190°C.

In a large roasting pan, put the thyme, bay leaves, garlic, carrots, olives, shallots and fennel. Spread everything out so it is evenly distributed.

Using a knife or kitchen scissors, cut the chicken on each side of the backbone and remove it (freeze for stock). Open the chicken out flat and place it, skin side up, on top of the other ingredients in the pan. Sprinkle the tomatoes around and drizzle the oil over everything. Season well with salt and pepper and pour two-thirds of the vermouth over the top.

Place in the oven for 1 hour or until the chicken is cooked through and golden brown. Remove from the oven. Place the chicken on a warm platter and surround with the vegetables.

Skim the fat from the pan and place it on high heat. Add the remaining vermouth and let it bubble, scraping the caramelised pan juices up with a wooden spoon. Stir in the butter, taste and season. Pour this over the chicken, sprinkle the parsley sprigs around everything and serve. Serves 6.

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Potato, Zucchini & Goat's Cheese Gratin

This easy accompaniment for the chicken can be cooked the day before and reheated when needed. Chèvre is a creamy French-style goat's cheese with a sweet and tangy flavour.

- **500ml milk**
- **3 eggs, beaten**
- **2 tablespoons chopped flat-leafed parsley, plus extra for serving**
- **800g floury potatoes, diced 2cm, rinsed in cold water and dried in a clean towel**
- **3 zucchini, diced 2cm**
- **3 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- **salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- **200g chèvre goat's cheese, crumbled into 1cm pieces**

Preheat the oven to 190°C. Put the milk, eggs and parsley in a bowl and mix well. Place the potatoes, zucchini and garlic in a shallow ovenproof dish (the one I use is about 30cm x 25cm), mix well and spread out in an even layer. Season well with salt and pepper. Pour the milk and egg mixture over the top. Sprinkle the cheese evenly over everything.

Place in the oven for 1 hour until well set and browned. Remove from the oven and serve sprinkled with parsley. Serves 6.

RHUBARB & STRAWBERRY SAVARINS WITH WHIPPED CREAM

This savarin recipe is based on one from *Great Desserts* by Christian Teubner and Sybil Grafin Schonfeldt (Hamlyn, 1983), a book I think every cook I know has. These attractive little pastries are like something from a French pâtissier and use yeast as the leavening agent, instead of baking powder. Soaked in syrup and served chilled with fruit and cream, with the kick of neat orange liqueur, they make a refreshing end to a special meal.

- **75g butter melted and cooled to lukewarm, plus extra for buttering the tins**
- **½ teaspoon powdered yeast**
- **50ml lukewarm milk**
- **175g flour, sifted, plus extra for dusting the tins**
- **2 eggs, beaten (but not foamy)**
- **1 tablespoon caster sugar**
- **¼ teaspoon salt**
- **finely grated zest of ½ lemon**

Melt a little of the extra butter and brush it on the inside of 8 x 50ml savarin tins, or one large one. If you have no savarin tins use a muffin tray and butter 8 cavities.

Sprinkle the yeast on to the milk and, without stirring, set aside in a warm place for 20-30 minutes until it becomes frothy. Mix well.

Put the flour in a mixing bowl and add the yeast mixture, eggs, sugar, salt and lemon zest. Beat well for 5 minutes (this can be done with a dough hook in an electric mixer at high speed) until you have an elastic but slightly runny dough.

Set aside in a warm place to rise for 15-20 minutes and preheat the oven to 200°C.

Beat the butter into the dough then pipe or spoon the mixture into the tins to half full. Allow to rise until doubled in bulk.

Place in the oven and bake for 10-12 minutes for small tins or 20-25 minutes for one large one. Test with a skewer inserted into the savarins; it should come out clean when they are cooked.

Remove from the oven and, when cool enough to handle, turn out on a rack to cool. Makes 8.

Rhubarb & Strawberries

- **500ml water**
- **300g caster sugar**
- **zest of 1 lemon**
- **3 sticks rhubarb, sliced into 3cm pieces**
- **200g strawberries, hulled and sliced**
- **100ml orange liqueur**
- **300ml cream, whipped**

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Put the water, sugar and zest in a saucepan. Bring to the boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar, then remove from the heat.

Put the rhubarb in a roasting pan and add the sugar syrup. Place in the oven for 10 minutes until the rhubarb is just tender but not collapsing.

Remove from the oven. Carefully lift the rhubarb pieces out of the syrup, which will have turned rose pink, and place side by side on a platter. Reserve.

Place the savarins side by side in the hot syrup with the "top" upwards. Give them a minute then turn them over so the side that was the "top" is now on the bottom. This is a firmer base for when you move them as they can be quite fragile once soaked with syrup. Allow them to soak up lots of syrup, basting frequently, so they expand in size.

When serving, carefully lift the savarins with a fish slice, allow to drain, and place on serving plates. Sprinkle some orange liqueur over each. Pile some strawberries and rhubarb in the middle and around them and serve with whipped cream. Serves 6. •

Credits: Sophie Conran dinnerware and iittala stemless white wine glass from The Studio of Tableware; all other props privately owned. For full details, see Credits Index.

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ORZO PASTA WITH SEAFOOD, ZUCCHINI, CAPERS & OLIVES
recipe page 64

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GONE FISHIN'

FOR CELIA HARVEY, COOKING SEAFOOD IS MORE THAN A MERE FLASH IN THE PAN

Summer is when we typically eat more fish and seafood, especially when holidaying on the coast. We have become much more adventurous when cooking seafood, not just sticking to the tried and true methods or species, especially now lesser-known varieties are becoming easier to source in the markets. Most of these recipes can be adapted for any variety of fish you may be lucky enough to find this summer and use the best of summer's bounty.

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY CELIA HARVEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIERAN SCOTT
STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

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PANFRIED SNAPPER WITH ANCHOVIES & PEPERONATA
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SKEWERS OF PRAWNS, SQUID & HAPUKU WITH CHARRED CORN, TOMATO & CORIANDER SALAD & TOMATO CUMIN DRESSING
recipe page 64

ANY SHELLFISH CAN BE SKEWERED AND BARBECUED LIKE THIS

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ROAST CHERMOULA KINGFISH WITH ONION & LEMON CONFIT & SPICED KUMARA

recipe page 65

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WHOLE SNAPPER BAKED IN SALT CRUST WITH CRACKED POTATOES, VINEGAR & OLIVES
recipe page 65

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ORZO PASTA WITH SEAFOOD, ZUCCHINI, CAPERS & OLIVES

I find this dish lighter for summer than a risotto and it can be eaten hot or cold as a salad. You can use any seafood – such as juicy mussels and clams, baby squid, crayfish tails or crabs if you can find them. This could also be made with couscous or rice as a paella-style dish.

- 400g orzo or risoni pasta
- olive oil for tossing and frying
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 zucchini, thinly sliced lengthwise
- 2 oranges
- 16 mussels or clams (or a combination of both)
- 200ml white wine
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 400g baby octopus, crabmeat, fish pieces, or whatever can be sourced
- 1 teaspoon dried chilli flakes
- 2 tablespoons capers
- ¼ cup olive oil
- handful flat-leafed parsley, finely chopped
- handful basil leaves, finely sliced
- 10-15 pitted black olives
- lemon halves to serve

Bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil and boil the pasta until al dente. Drain and refresh under cold water, drain again, toss with some olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Heat a grill pan until hot, brush the zucchini slices with oil, place in the pan and cook on each side until even grill marks appear. Set aside.

Grate the zest of 1 orange and set aside then peel both oranges with a sharp knife, removing the pith. Cut into quarters then into small triangles. Reserve along with any juice.

Heat a large skillet that will hold all the seafood. Add enough oil to cover the base then carefully place in the mussels and/or clams. Place a lid on and leave to steam open (about 5 minutes).

Add the wine and garlic. Shake the pan around to coat the mussels then add the seafood or fish. Sprinkle the chilli flakes and capers over. Leave on medium heat for 5-8 minutes then add the reserved orange pieces and ¼ cup olive oil. Toss through the parsley, basil, olives and reserved orange zest. Taste and season well.

Place the orzo on warmed plates or a serving dish and spoon the seafood over the top along with some juice, top with zucchini and drizzle with olive oil. Serve warm or cold with lemon halves. Serves 4.

SKEWERS OF PRAWNS, SQUID & HAPUKU WITH CHARRED CORN, TOMATO & CORIANDER SALAD & TOMATO CUMIN DRESSING

Any shellfish can be skewered and barbecued, but the firmer-fleshed varieties of fish hold better on the skewers. Scallops can be used here instead of prawns, or mussels pulled raw from their shells.

Salad of Charred Corn, Tomatoes & Coriander

- 3 cobs sweetcorn
- 6 ripe tomatoes
- 2 red onions, sliced into thick rings
- 4 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 100ml olive oil
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon paprika (smoked sweet is best)
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds, toasted and ground
- 1 bunch coriander leaves, torn
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a large saucepan bring the corn to the boil and cook for 10 minutes (this takes the bite out of the corn and makes it easier to prepare).

Meanwhile, cut the tomatoes in quarters, cut out the seedy cores and reserve for the dressing.

Heat a grill pan or barbecue and place the tomatoes skin side down on the surface to blister the skin (8-10 minutes on high heat).

Place the onions on the grill also. When soft and coloured (this will happen quickly), take off the heat and place in a bowl.

Toss the vinegar, oil, sugar, paprika and cumin over the onions while they are still hot.

Drain the corn, stand the cobs on their ends and slice off the kernels, keeping them in large pieces.

Place the corn on the grill and cook until a good charred colour (this will pop and char quickly). Add to the bowl and stir everything together gently. Add the coriander leaves, taste and season with salt and pepper.

Tomato Cumin Dressing

- 6 tomatoes (or the reserved cores from the corn salad, plus 2 whole tomatoes)
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon toasted cumin seeds, ground
- 1 teaspoon paprika (sweet smoked if possible)
- 2 tablespoons red wine or sherry vinegar
- 100ml olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a food processor place all the ingredients except the olive oil. Pulse until smooth and fine. Slowly add the oil in a thin stream with the motor running until a thick emulsion forms. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Skewers of Prawns, Squid & Hapuku

- 2 skinned and boned fillets hapuku (or other firm white fish), cut into 2cm cubes
- 8 x large whole raw prawns
- 2 squid tubes, cleaned, trimmed and cut into strips
- 8 x skewers (if using bamboo soak in water for 30 minutes)
- olive oil for brushing
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- lemon wedges for serving

Thread about 3 pieces of fish, a prawn and strip of squid (in an "s" shape to stop it unravelling) on to each skewer. Brush with oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and place under a hot grill or on the barbecue until just cooked.

Squeeze lemon juice over and serve with more lemon wedges, the corn salad and the tomato cumin dressing alongside to spoon over. Serves 4.

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WHOLE SNAPPER BAKED IN SALT CRUST WITH CRACKED POTATOES, VINEGAR & OLIVES

Cooking a whole fish in a salt crust keeps the flesh moist while imparting a light saltiness. Plus, it's a wonderfully theatrical dish to serve at the table, cracking the casing of salt to reveal a steaming stuffed fish.

- 1 large whole snapper or other fish like John Dory, trevally or alfonsino (about 1kg gutted and scaled)
- freshly ground black pepper
- 2 lemons
- 1 bulb fennel, trimmed of coarse outer leaves and thinly sliced
- 3 egg whites
- 1kg coarse rock salt

Preheat the oven to 150°C-170°C. Clean the fish under running water and pat dry inside and out.

Season the cavity with pepper. Thinly slice 1 lemon and stuff along with the fennel into the cavity.

Whisk the egg whites to soft peaks then start raining in the salt, whisking it in. It will hold all the salt and creates a meringue effect that won't collapse. Whisk to firm peaks.

Line a large flat baking dish with baking paper and spoon a base of the salt mix over. Place the fish on top then cover with the remaining salt mix, leaving the head and tail exposed for effect. You can shape scales or a wave pattern in the mix if you like.

Bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes until the eyes turn white and opaque. You want the salt to cook without colouring too much; it darkens quickly and the fish will continue cooking under the crust after removing from the oven. Crack the salt crust and serve with lemon wedges. Serves 4-6.

Cracked Potatoes with Vinegar & Olives

- 1kg small red potatoes
- 4 tablespoons red wine, sherry or balsamic vinegar
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 bay leaves, thinly sliced
- 25g butter
- handful green olives

Preheat the oven to 180°C. With a serrated knife, slice the potatoes about three-quarters of the way through crosswise in parallel lines. This is known as Hasselback style.

Place the potatoes in a hot baking dish with the vinegar and olive oil, roll them around to coat then sit them cut side up. Season with salt and pepper, add the bay leaves, dab the butter over the potatoes, scatter the olives in and place in the oven for 20 minutes until split and cooked. Serve with the fish.

ROAST CHERMOULA KINGFISH WITH ONION & LEMON CONFIT & SPICED KUMARA

Kingfish is meaty enough to hold the bold flavour of this rub, inspired by Middle Eastern and North African dishes made with fresh and dried spices. This is a summer banquet of fresh fish and summer produce.

Onion & Lemon Confit

- 6 large onions, thinly sliced
- 100g butter
- 1 knob fresh ginger (thumbnail size), cut into thin matchsticks
- 4 teaspoons ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- peel of 2 preserved lemons (and some of their syrup), sliced into thick strips
- freshly ground black pepper to taste

Place the onions in a frying pan with the butter and ginger, and fry gently on a low heat until the onions start to brown and stick slightly (about 20 minutes).

Stir in the spices and preserved lemon peel, and cook for a further 5 minutes then add the reserved syrup from the lemons. Season with pepper. Let stand to cool before serving.

Spiced Kumara

This recipe is from Claudia Roden's book *Tamarind and Saffron: Favourite Recipes from the Middle East*. It works well with our native purple-skinned kumara as well as the suggested sweet potato variety.

- 1kg golden kumara, peeled and cut into chunks
- 75g butter
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons raisins or sultanas, soaked in water for 10 minutes to soften
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- extra virgin olive oil for drizzling

Boil the kumara in salted water until soft then drain and mash. Add the butter and sprinkle in the spices. Stir in the drained raisins or sultanas, and season with salt and pepper. Serve hot, drizzled with olive oil.

Roast Chermoula Kingfish

- 1 cup fruity extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup lemon juice
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ½ cup chopped fresh coriander
- 6 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 4 medium skinned and boned kingfish fillets (150g-180g each)

Place all the ingredients except the fish in the bowl of a food processor and blend together lightly. Rub some of this paste over the fillets and leave to marinate for up to 3 hours (reserve the remaining paste).

Preheat the oven to 180°C and place the fillets on a baking tray that has been lightly oiled and sprinkled with some salt and pepper. Place in the oven and roast for 8-10 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fillets. Serve topped with confit and with the kumara alongside . Serves 4.

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PANFRIED SNAPPER WITH ANCHOVIES & PEPERONATA

The anchovies and rosemary work well with the snapper and melted with butter make a wonderful pan sauce. I like to use snapper with the skin on, fried nice and crisp, though skinless fillets will be fine.

Peperonata is a rustic stew of onions and capsicums, slow-cooked until sweet, and just held together with tomato. You can also add olives, fresh chopped herbs or capers. It is delicious eaten at room temperature, cold on bruschetta, or tossed through pasta. It is best made with really ripe summer tomatoes and capsicums.

Peperonata

- olive oil for frying
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 6 capsicums (I use red and yellow), cored, seeded and sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 4 ripe tomatoes, halved, seeded and coarsely chopped
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Heat a heavy-based frying pan with enough olive oil to cover the bottom. Add the onions, stir to coat in oil and fry gently until starting to soften. Add the capsicums and garlic, and cover to steam and retain the sweet juice of the capsicums.

Cook gently for 20-30 minutes on low, stirring occasionally, until all soft and lightly browned.

Stir in the tomatoes, taste and season. Cook a further 10-15 minutes then cool slightly to serve warm.

Panfried Snapper with Anchovies

- 4 boneless snapper fillets (150g-180g each), skin on
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- olive oil for frying
- 4-6 anchovy fillets, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped rosemary leaves
- 50g unsalted butter

Season each side of the fillets with a little salt and pepper. Heat a large frying pan with enough olive oil to cover the base. When hot but not smoking, put the fish in the pan skin side down, pressing the fish lightly and evenly so the skin starts to crackle (this helps to ensure crisp skin).

Only turn the fish once. Each side will need only 2-3 minutes to just cook through. Add the anchovies to the sides of the pan and sprinkle the rosemary over everything. It is always better to undercook fish, so work quickly and remove the fish from the pan, leaving the anchovies to melt in the oil and cooking juices. Add the butter and swirl around the pan, collecting the rosemary. Spoon this over the fish and serve the peperonata alongside. Serves 4. ●

■ Thanks to Mike Audi from KSV vegetable suppliers for the fresh vegetables.

Credits: Fishing hooks and sinkers, dominoes, serving utensils, blue- and red-rimmed serving plate, blue and gold floral patterned serving plate and pottery bowl from Antiques of Epsom; glass sailing decanter with matching shot glasses, glass bowl, glass bottle, salt and pepper shakers, dinner plates, green-rimmed 50s serving plate and red- and gold-rimmed serving plate from Babushka Antiques; table top, wine glasses and La Chamba baking dish from French Country Collections (for stockists ph: 0800-503 500); seat from La Cigale. For full details, see Credits Index.

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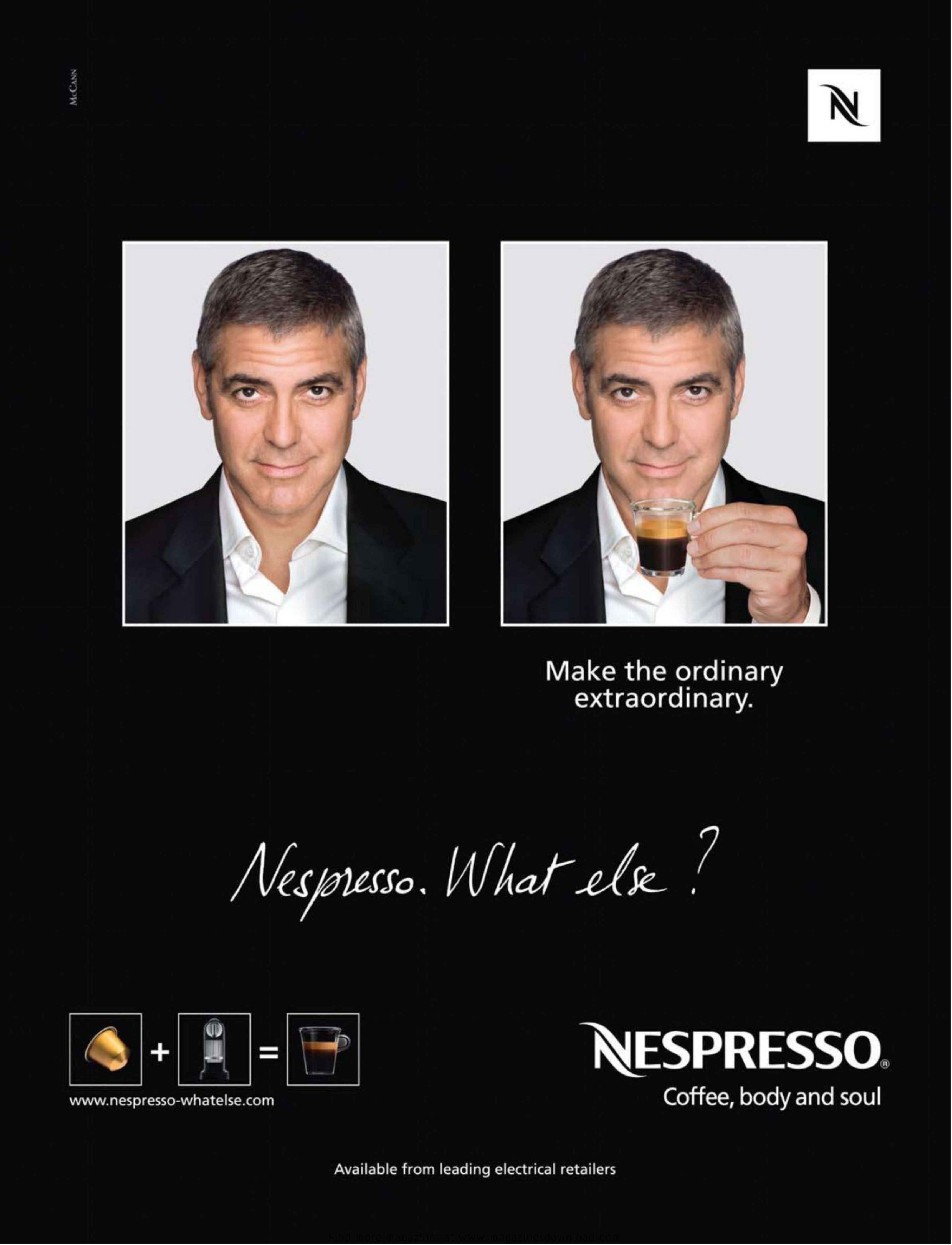
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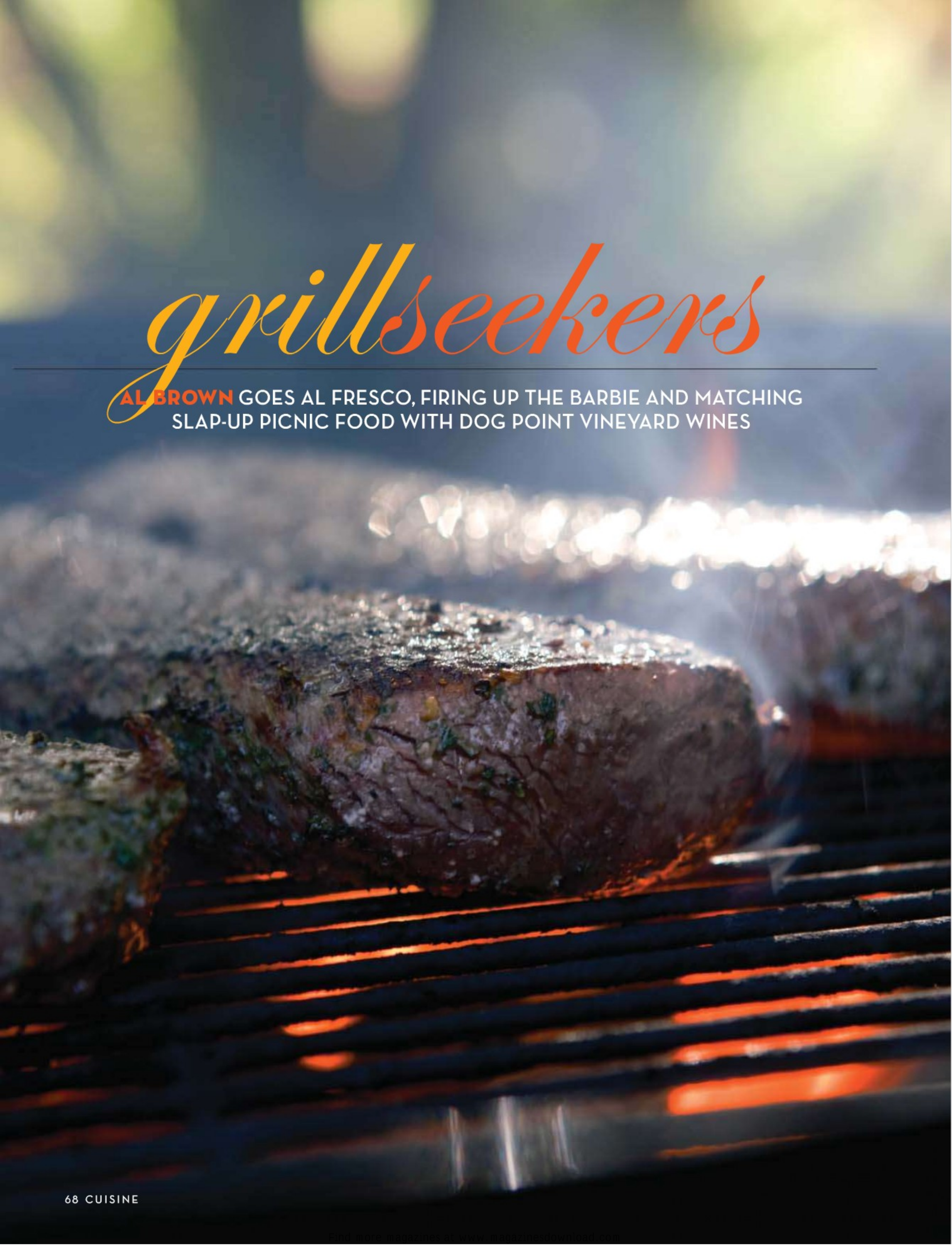

grillseekers

AL BROWN GOES AL FRESCO, FIRING UP THE BARBIE AND MATCHING SLAP-UP PICNIC FOOD WITH DOG POINT VINEYARD WINES

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CHARGRILLED VENISON WITH PUMPKIN & FETA SALAD, BARBECUED MUSHROOMS, GRILLED SPRING ONIONS & CRANBERRY RELISH

recipe page 75

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY AL BROWN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIERAN SCOTT

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As a nation that treasures and celebrates the great outdoors, it's hardly surprising we love to picnic. I would think most of us have early memories of munching on a filled roll beachside while also taking in the recommended daily amount of roughage in the form of half a teaspoon or so of fine golden sand.

When I was a kid we had numerous roadside picnics, my sisters and I perched on wooden A-frame-style tables at "rest areas" dotted along the North Island's State Highway 1. We would pull off the road and delight in our cold mutton sandwiches with tomato sauce, washed down with a plastic cup of warm Orange Quench while Mum and Dad enjoyed a thermos of Gregg's Red Ribbon Roast. These outdoor gourmet affairs, just metres from the tarmac, were still considered picnics to me, even with the continuous rumbling of cars and trucks speeding by, filling the air with that heady perfume of exhaust fumes.

Not to be put off, I have since enjoyed and mastered the art of a great picnic. There are no rules or specific guidelines when it comes to picnicking. They can be extremely simple and humble affairs or full-blown grand occasions. The following sits firmly in the latter category.

Hanging out in the Blenheim airport one day, waiting for the gale-force winds to abate in Wellington, I happened upon our great friends Ivan Sutherland and James Healy from the celebrated Dog Point Vineyard. Lunch at a local eatery seemed just the tonic. I love a long impromptu lunch and we had some damn fine Dog Point Chardonnay. A plan was hatched to take our two classic Holdens (1964 and 1971), plus of course all the canines, for the ultimate picnic, Dog Point/Logan Brown style. This is the result.

→ You can join the next Dog Point/Logan Brown picnic; see page 16 for details.

LEMON, MINT & VODKA PUNCH
recipe page 74

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GRILLED CLOUDY BAY TUATUA WITH LEMON TARRAGON BUTTER
recipe page 74

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CHILLED CRAYFISH WITH PINK GRAPEFRUIT, AVOCADO & WATERCRESS SALAD
recipe page 74

THE RICHNESS OF THE CHILLED CRAYFISH AND AVOCADO IS OFFSET PERFECTLY BY THE SHARPNESS OF THE GRAPEFRUIT AND THE PEPPERY FINISH OF WATERCRESS

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LEMON, MINT & VODKA PUNCH

A cocktail of some sort over large cubes of ice on a warm sunny day is a sure-fire way to kick off a picnic in style. This super-refreshing punch is adapted from a recipe by Julie Clark of Floriditas Café & Restaurant fame in Cuba St, Wellington. Over summer "Flo's" sells gallons of this homemade lemonade with generous amounts of fresh mint leaves muddled through. I'm a huge fan of it and all I have done is added a slosh of vodka to zhoosh it up a notch.

Lemon Cordial

- finely grated zest and juice of 1.5kg lemons
- 1.5kg sugar
- 1 litre water
- 1 tablespoon tartaric acid

Place the lemon zest and juice in a small bowl. Put the sugar and water in a saucepan on medium heat and bring to the boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Boil for 30 seconds or so before adding the tartaric acid. Follow this with the lemon zest and juice, stirring to combine. Remove from the heat and allow to cool slightly.

Store in sterilised preserving jars or bottles and refrigerate once opened.

For the punch

- ice
- 1 litre vodka
- lemon cordial
- 3 litres soda water
- 1 bunch fresh mint
- fresh limes
- fresh lemons

It's up to you to mix your perfect punch. Start by adding a heap of ice into a large jug or punch bowl and pour vodka over to suit your taste. Add a moderate amount of lemon cordial followed by plenty of soda water. Taste and adjust accordingly.

To finish, add a good amount of torn or chopped mint leaves and drop in a few slices of limes and lemons. Pour into tumblers, sip and relax.

GRILLED CLOUDY BAY TUATUA WITH LEMON TARRAGON BUTTER

with Dog Point Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc 2008

Super-simple to do on a barbecue, these outstanding Cloudy Bay tuatua cook in a matter of 1-2 minutes. The beauty of cooking them this way is they can be removed as soon as they open, preventing overcooking which often occurs when they are buried at the bottom of a pot. Pipi, clams and mussels will all enjoy this treatment.

- 250g salted butter, coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped garlic
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh tarragon
- ⅓ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leafed parsley
- 2 tablespoons finely grated lemon zest
- juice of 2 lemons
- freshly ground black pepper
- 120 tuatua

Preheat the barbecue until good and hot. On the side or corner of the grill place a small metal bowl or saucepan and add the butter, garlic, tarragon, parsley, and lemon zest and juice then add a good half a dozen grinds of pepper. Stir together once the butter is melted then remove from the heat and keep warm.

Split the tuatua into four even amounts. Place a batch at a time on the hot grill and remove as they open then place in a large stainless steel bowl. Once all open, stir the butter mixture quickly to combine everything then pour enough over the tuatua to coat. Toss in the bowl then pour on to a platter and serve along with bread for mopping up the butter and juices. Repeat with the remaining tuatua.

A finger bowl and receptacle for the shells is a great idea. Serves 8.

CHILLED CRAYFISH WITH PINK GRAPEFRUIT, AVOCADO & WATERCRESS SALAD

with Dog Point Vineyard Chardonnay 2007

This is a classic salad with all the components in harmony. The richness of the chilled crayfish and avocado is offset perfectly by the sharpness of the grapefruit and the peppery finish of watercress. Again, it is a simple dish to prepare and will travel well when kept nice and cool in your esky.

- 2 large pink grapefruit
- 2 large avocados (firm but ripe)
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 handfuls watercress
- 4 x 500g crayfish, cooked and chilled
- 1 cup good-quality mayonnaise (preferably homemade)
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

With a sharp paring knife or similar, carefully remove the grapefruit skin along with any tough white pith. Slice between each membrane to delicately remove the segments of flesh. Cut these into thirds and place in a small plastic container with a lid.

Peel the avocados and remove the stones. Cut into largish chunks, place in a bowl and with clean hands delicately toss 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice through. Place in another airtight container with a lid.

Wash and dry the watercress then remove the large stems. Place in an airtight container or wrap in a clean damp tea towel.

Split the crayfish with a sharp, heavy knife, slicing down the length of each one from head to tail. Remove the flesh from the tails, chop into chunks and place in a bowl.

Extract the rest of the flesh in the body and legs. (I find kitchen shears and a small meat cleaver perfect tools for this job.) Add this to the rest of the tail meat.

Spoon the mayonnaise over the crayfish, add the remaining lemon juice and mix until combined. Chill in the fridge in a container with a lid.

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To assemble, place the grapefruit segments (reserving any juice from the container) and avocado in a medium bowl. Gently rip the watercress into pieces and place on top. Pour the olive oil over, add a pinch of sea salt and a grind of pepper, toss to combine then divide among the serving plates.

Mix a tablespoon or so of reserved grapefruit juice into the crayfish mayonnaise then serve on the salad portions. A grind of pepper and you're good to go. Serves 8.

CHARGRILLED VENISON WITH PUMPKIN & FETA SALAD, BARBECUED MUSHROOMS, GRILLED SPRING ONIONS & CRANBERRY RELISH

with Dog Point Vineyard Pinot Noir 2007

ALMOND PRALINE SEMIFREDDO WITH DRUNKEN STONE FRUIT
recipe page 76

This picnic dish has wonderful earthy characters. Most of the preparation can be done ahead of your outing, with just the relatively quick cooking of the mushrooms, spring onions and venison to bring it all together.

Marinated Venison Backstrap

- 2 x 1kg pieces venison backstrap, silver skin removed
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh sage
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh rosemary
- ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil

Place the venison in a high-sided tray. Sprinkle the herbs and olive oil over. With clean hands, massage the herbs all over the venison, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate. This can be done a couple of hours before or, better still, the day before.

Cranberry Relish

- 250g sugar
- ¼ cup water
- finely minced zest of 2 oranges
- 50g ginger, grated
- 1kg fresh cranberries
- 1½ cups fresh orange juice
- finely ground white pepper

Place a heavy-based saucepan on medium heat and add the sugar and water. Let the sugar caramelise. Once golden, immediately add the orange zest and ginger then the cranberries and orange juice. The sugar will turn quite solid at this stage. Just reduce the heat to low and it will soon melt, with the cranberries beginning to break down. Stir occasionally. The relish is ready once it has reached a jam-like consistency.

Remove from the heat and season with a little white pepper. When cool, preserve in jars or refrigerate in an airtight container.

Pumpkin & Feta Salad

- 1.2kg pumpkin, peeled, seeded and diced 2cm
- ⅓ cup canola oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ cup red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh basil leaves
- 150g feta, crumbled
- 1 cup toasted fresh walnuts

Preheat the oven to 180°C and place a roasting dish in the oven to heat up.

Tip the pumpkin in a bowl and pour the oil over. Season with sea salt and black pepper, and toss to combine.

Put the pumpkin in the hot oven dish and place in the oven for 20-30 minutes until golden and just soft. Remove from the oven and cool.

Place the pumpkin in a suitable container then top with the onion, basil, feta and walnuts. Refrigerate until required.

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Walnut Vinaigrette

- 3 tablespoons sherry vinegar
- ½ cup walnut oil (toasted if possible)
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Place the vinegar in a bowl and slowly whisk in the walnut oil then add the brown sugar. Whisk for another minute, taste then season with sea salt and black pepper. Pour into a jar with a lid. Reserve.

Blanched Spring Onions

- 16 spring onions

Half fill a bowl with cold water and add some ice. Put a medium saucepan half filled with salted water on high heat. Once boiling, add the spring onions and cook for 2 minutes.

Drain then plunge the onions into the iced water. Once cold, remove and dry in a salad spinner or clean tea towel. Refrigerate.

Garlic Portobello Mushrooms

- 250g salted butter
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 8-16 Portobello mushrooms (depending on their size), peeled

In a small saucepan or the microwave, melt the butter and garlic together. Pour into a plastic container. Put the mushrooms in a container to transport.

To cook

- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- canola oil for frying

Heat the chargrill or barbecue. Season the venison liberally with sea salt and black pepper. Carefully place on the hot grill and cook for 6-7 minutes on one side then turn and repeat on the other. To see whether it is cooked correctly (medium) slice a little off the end. You can always cook it a little more, but do not overcook venison. Once you're happy with the doneness, remove from the heat to rest.

Lightly brush the mushrooms with oil, season with salt and pepper, and place on the grill open side down for a few minutes then turn. Spoon a little garlic butter on the inside of each. Once cooked, place on a platter.

Brush the spring onions lightly with oil and toss on the grill for a couple of minutes until slightly charred. Place around the platter of mushrooms.

Tip the pumpkin mix into a serving bowl, pour the walnut vinaigrette over and toss gently to combine.

Slice the rested venison and arrange on another platter. Open the cranberry relish, whistle in the troops, lunch is served. Serves 8.

ALMOND PRALINE SEMIFREDDO WITH DRUNKEN STONE FRUIT

with Cloudy Bay Late Harvest Riesling 2004

This dish capped the day off. It's a recipe designed by our very talented pastry chef at Logan Brown, Christine Thompson. It's easy to make and can be prepared a few days ahead. It's a beaut way to finish a lavish picnic.

Almond Praline

- 100g whole blanched almonds
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon water

Preheat the oven to 160°C. Place the almonds on an oven tray and bake in the oven for 8-10 minutes until golden. Remove and cool.

Place the sugar and water in a small saucepan on low heat to dissolve the sugar then increase the heat and cook the sugar to a golden caramel. Pour immediately over the toasted almonds and leave to cool.

When hard, break up the praline and blend in a food processor until it resembles slightly chunky crumbs.

Almond Praline Semifreddo

- 400ml cream
- 150g sugar
- ⅓ cup water
- 6 egg yolks
- ½ teaspoon vanilla essence

Place 10 dariole moulds in the freezer to chill. Whip the cream to soft peaks and place in the fridge.

Place the sugar and water in a small saucepan on medium heat. Once the sugar is dissolved, cook to 115°C. If you don't have a thermometer, cook for 5-7 minutes then remove a small amount and drop into cold water. The sugar should hold together and be mouldable when rubbed between your fingers. This is called "soft ball" stage. Remove and keep warm.

Place the egg yolks and vanilla in a cake mixer fitted with a whisk attachment. Whisk until the yolks are pale, thick and at least twice the volume.

While continuing to whisk, slowly drizzle in the sugar syrup. Continue to whisk until the mixture is cold. Using a rubber scraper, pour the mix into a large mixing bowl. Fold in the whipped cream and three-quarters of the praline crumbs (reserve the rest for garnish).

Spoon the semifreddo into the cold dariole moulds and place in the freezer to set.

Drunken Stone Fruit

- 800g assorted ripe stone fruit
- 1¼ cups late harvest Riesling (or similar)
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- ½ cup finely chopped fresh mint leaves

Remove the stones from the fruit. Cut into small wedges and place in a mixing bowl.

Pour the wine and brown sugar over then fold in the mint. Place in the fridge to marinate for at least 1 hour.

To serve

To transport the dessert, place the moulds in a container surrounded by ice packs and place in a chilly bin. Pour the fruit into a plastic container with a tight-fitting lid and place in the chilly bin as well. Don't forget the reserved almond praline crumbs.

Remove the moulds from the chilly bin and leave at room temperature for 4-5 minutes. Take a small paring style knife and run it round the inside of a mould then tip it upside down on a plate and remove the mould. Repeat with the rest. Serve some of the fruit and juice next to the semifreddos and garnish with the almond brittle crumbs. Serve now! Serves 8-10. ●

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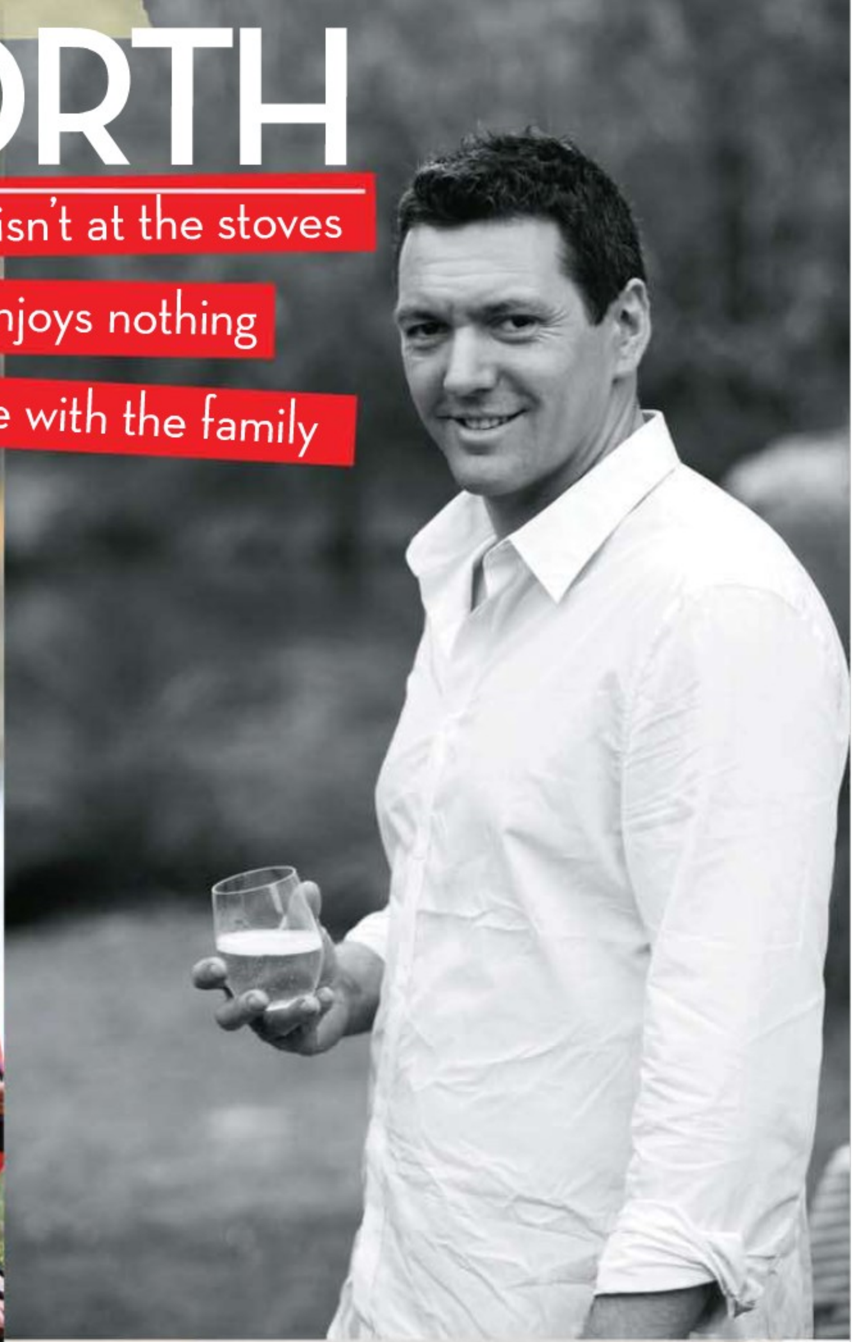
TRUE NORTH

When Kiwi chef Justin North isn't at the stoves of his top Sydney restaurants, he enjoys nothing better than a barbecue with the family



Like New Zealand, Australia is surrounded by a stunning coastline and has incredible national parks, which make a breathtaking backdrop to a relaxing family picnic. It is not often we all get to spend some quality time together, so when the opportunity is there, we love to throw our stuff in the back of the car and head for the hills, or in this case the stunning surrounds of Wattamolla Beach in the Royal National Park, about 80 minutes' drive south of Sydney. Our family outings are always based around the picnic table.

I like to take advantage of Australia's amazing array of quality producers and their fabulous produce. To make the most of my time with the kids, I generally opt for something easy but interesting to cook that is packed with great flavour. The kids love good tasty meat, refreshing juices and fruit crushes, and we can never leave out Nan's fabulous strawberry icy pops.

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY JUSTIN NORTH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANSON SMART / PRODUCED BY JOHN NOBLE

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Menu

Entrées

Barbecued Pork Neck
with Spices & Herbs
Salad of Butterflied Quail with Soy,
Ginger, Pears & Sesame

Shared Platters

Grilled Brochettes of Provençal Lamb Belly
Marinated Rump of Grilled Grass-Fed Veal
Grilled Bavette of Beef with
Salsa Verde

Side Dishes

Warm Salad of Green Beans,
Prosciutto & Feta
Tomato, Buffalo Mozzarella
& Spanish Onion Salad

I generally opt for something easy but interesting to cook

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SALAD OF BUTTERFLIED QUAIL WITH SOY, GINGER, PEARS & SESAME
recipe page 84

that is packed with great flavour

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I like to take advantage of Australia's amazing array of quality

GRILLED BROCHETTES OF PROVENÇAL LAMB BELLY WITH WARM SALAD OF GREEN BEANS, PROSCIUTTO & FETA
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GRILLED BAVETTE OF BEEF WITH SALSA VERDE & TOMATO, BUFFALO MOZZARELLA & SPANISH ONION SALAD
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BARBECUED PORK NECK WITH SPICES & HERBS

Try to use free-range or rare-breed pork for this cut as the neck will have a more intense intramuscular fat marbling, creating a juicier, tender mouthfeel and great depth of flavour. Loin, fillet, belly or leg steaks can also be used for this dish. Start this dish at least eight hours ahead.

To marinate the pork

- 6 whole cloves
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 2 star anise
- juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons honey
- pinch of salt
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 4 x 100g boneless pork neck steaks

Place the cloves, cinnamon and star anise in a mortar and tap with the pestle to break.

Place in a saucepan with the lemon juice, honey, salt and peanut oil. Whisk over a medium heat until hot and the honey and salt are dissolved. Remove from the heat and cool.

Place the pork in a bowl, pour the marinade over and massage it into the meat with your hands. Leave to marinate for at least 6 hours, covered in the refrigerator.

To cook and serve

- 1 bunch baby radish, finely sliced
- 2 bunches microgreens such as coriander and purple shiso (perilla)

Grill the pork on a hot barbecue until caramelised and cooked.

Place on serving plates and top with the radish and snipped coriander and shiso. Serves 4 as an entrée.

SALAD OF BUTTERFLIED QUAIL WITH SOY, GINGER, PEARS & SESAME

If you prefer, the quail in this recipe can be replaced with spatchcock or chicken. Corella, Packham, Josephine, Bosc or Nashi pears are all suitable. Start this recipe about 6 hours ahead.

To marinate the quail

- 4 butterflied quail
- 100ml light soy sauce
- 80ml cooking sake (or mirin would also work here)
- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil

Place all the ingredients in a sealable sandwich bag and shake well to coat the quail thoroughly. Marinate in the fridge for 6 hours.

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To cook and serve
- 2 pears, each cut into 8 wedges and cored
- ½ cup lemon balm leaves, torn
- 1 teaspoon white sesame seeds
- pinch of sea salt
- 1 lime

Remove the quail from the bag and grill on a hot barbecue for 3 minutes on each side until pink and succulent.

Mix the pears with the torn lemon balm leaves and sesame seeds. Season with salt and some fresh lime to taste.

Place the warm grilled quail on serving plates and top with the pear salad. Serves 4 as an entrée.

GRILLED BROCHETTES OF PROVENÇAL LAMB BELLY WITH WARM SALAD OF GREEN BEANS, PROSCIUTTO & FETA

You can also use rump, loin fillet or leg here – all more than adequate substitutes. You need 16 large bamboo skewers for this recipe. It is a good idea to soak them in water overnight to avoid them burning on the barbecue.

- 1kg lamb belly, trimmed of excess fat, sinew and skin
- 16 bamboo skewers
- 6 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
- ¼ cup fresh thyme leaves
- ¼ cup fresh rosemary leaves
- 4 fresh bay leaves
- 150ml olive oil

Cut the lamb into 16 x 60g strips. Thread each strip on to a skewer like a shish kebab.

Rub the garlic and coarsely chopped herbs into the lamb with the oil, cover and refrigerate to marinate for 6 hours.

Grill on a hot barbecue for a minute or so on each side until caramelised and aromatic. Serve to your guests on a platter. Serves 4 as a main.

Warm Salad of Green Beans, Prosciutto & Feta
- 400g green beans
- 4 slices prosciutto
- 100g crumbled marinated feta
- ½ cup torn mint leaves
- 50ml extra virgin olive oil
- sea salt to taste

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Blanch the green beans in boiling salted water for 3 minutes until just cooked. Remove from the water and drain. Toss with the remaining ingredients and serve with the lamb belly. Serves 4 as a side dish.

MARINATED RUMP OF GRILLED GRASS-FED VEAL

Use young veal from three months or up to nine-month-old, yearling or runner beef.

- ½ cup lemon thyme leaves
- 6 cloves garlic
- ¼ cup fresh marjoram
- grated zest of 1 lemon
- 8 coriander seeds
- pinch of sea salt
- 1kg veal rump
- grapeseed oil for frying

Place all the ingredients except the veal in a mortar and pestle, and crush until aromatic. Rub this all over the veal, cover and refrigerate for 6 hours.

Sear the veal in on the hot barbecue with a little grapeseed oil then cover it with a stainless steel bowl while still on the barbecue to form a makeshift oven (or you could bake in a 160°C oven after searing) for 45 minutes.

Allow to stand in a warm place for 15 minutes then carve into thin slices and serve on a large platter. Serves 6.

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GRILLED BAVETTE OF BEEF, SALSA VERDE & TOMATO, BUFFALO MOZZARELLA & SPANISH ONION SALAD

Salsa Verde

- 1 clove garlic
- ½ cup flat-leafed parsley
- ½ cup basil
- 6 leaves mint
- 1 teaspoon tiny capers
- 1 anchovy fillet (or more according to taste), rinsed
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- 80ml extra virgin olive oil
- lemon juice to taste
- sea salt

Chop the garlic, herbs, capers and anchovy then add the remaining ingredients. Mix well, taste and adjust the seasoning.

For the beef

- 1 x 900g bavette (beef skirt steak)
- 50ml grapeseed oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Slice the bavette across the grain into thin escalopes, drizzle with the oil and season with salt and pepper.

Grill on a hot barbecue. Serve on a platter and drizzle with the salsa. Serves 4 as a main.

Tomato, Buffalo Mozzarella & Spanish Onion Salad

- 400g mixed heirloom tomatoes (or a mix of available varieties)
- 120g buffalo mozzarella, sliced
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced into rings
- 50ml extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon sherry vinegar
- sea salt to taste
- 1 bunch green basil microgreens
- 1 bunch opal basil microgreens
- 1 tablespoon thyme leaves

Cut the tomatoes into chunky wedges and arrange on a serving plate with the mozzarella. Drape the onion on top, drizzle with the oil and vinegar, sprinkle with salt, garnish with the herbs and serve with the bavette. Serves 4 as a side dish. ●

■ Justin North, the *Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide* 2009 Chef of the Year, is the chef-patron of Bécasse, Etch, Plan B café and Le Grand Café. becasse.com.au and etchdining.com.au

■ Special thanks to Tourism NSW. For more information about visiting Wattamolla and the Royal National Park visit sydney.com

■ Credits: Justin North wears T-shirt and shirt from Country Road; Georgia North wears a maxi-dress from Muccia by Melanie Cutfield, jewellery by Dinosaur Designs and Tom Ford sunglasses; Sofia wears Country Road and Charlie wears Bonds; platters, salad servers and pitcher from Dinosaur Designs; Riedel Champagne glasses and Happy O glassware from Glengarry; plates from Australian Fine China; chairs and stool from Ici et La, Surry Hills. For full details, see Credits Index.

Refreshers

Nan's Strawberry Icy Pops

My nana lived in a beautiful old house in Orepuki in the deep south of the South Island. She had the most amazing garden and grew the best strawberries. When we were kids we used to stay with her during our holidays and she made these amazing frozen strawberry lollies by simply blitzing incredibly ripe and fragrant strawberries in a food processor, pouring the mix into ice-block moulds and freezing them. They were just sensational and really highlighted how brilliant great produce can be. If you like you can add a little sugar or a dash of water. If it's for the adults a drop or two of Grand Marnier is sublime.

Refresher of Watermelon, Lime, Mint & Crushed Ice

- 1 handful ice
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 fresh lime, coarsely chopped (skin on)
- 6 leaves mint
- 800ml watermelon juice (whizz up fresh watermelon, pips removed, in a blender, or buy from a juice bar)

Place the ice, sugar, lime and mint in a container and pulp with the end of a rolling pin. Divide into 4 serving glasses and add the watermelon juice. Makes 1 litre or 4 x 250ml serves.

Fresh Lemonade with Lemon Balm

- 1 handful ice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 fresh lemon, coarsely chopped (skin on)
- 10 leaves lemon balm
- 150ml freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 800ml water

Place the ice, sugar, lemon and lemon balm in a container and pulp with the end of a rolling pin. Mix in the lemon juice and water and divide into 4 serving glasses. Makes 1 litre or 4 x 250ml portions.

Iced Verbena & Lemongrass Tea

- 1 handful ice
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 fresh lemon, coarsely chopped (skin on)
- 1 fresh lime, coarsely chopped (skin on)
- 1 stick lemongrass
- 10 leaves verbena
- 800ml lightly brewed Earl Grey tea (or Marco Polo tea if available)

Place all the ingredients except the tea in a container and pulp with the end of a rolling pin. Mix in the tea and allow to infuse for an hour or so in the refrigerator. Serve by pouring into 4 glasses. Makes 1 litre or 4 x 250ml serves.

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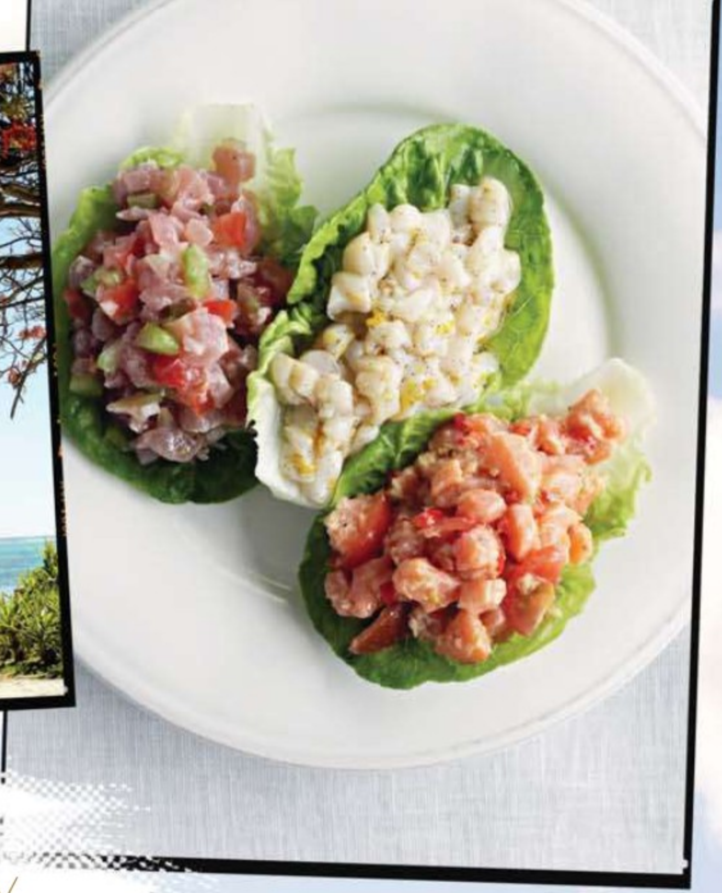


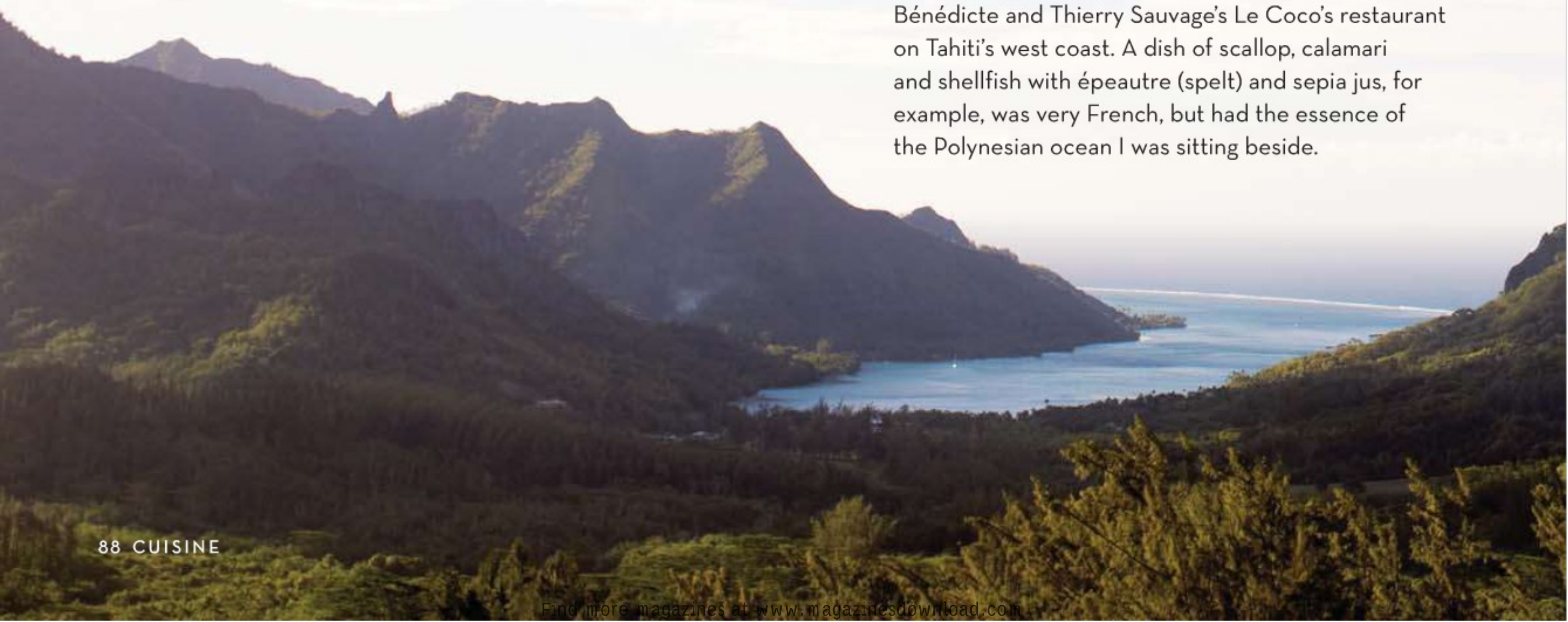
A TRIP TO THE ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF TAHITI SEEMED A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO GET INSPIRATION FOR SUMMER FOOD,

but we didn't have an auspicious start, touching down in the middle of a lightning storm and the next day spending a few hours up a mountain due to a tsunami warning. However, the tsunami was just a tiny swell by the time it reached Tahiti and there is plenty of fabulous food to inspire you and loads to do there, even if the weather lets you down.

The 118 islands that form French Polynesia – which we often think of collectively as Tahiti – stretch over four million square kilometres of aquamarine Pacific Ocean. We visited the popular Society Islands of Tahiti, Moorea and Raiatea. These three islands rise dramatically from the sea, thanks to their volcanic past, into a breathtakingly lush mountainscape that contrasts with the vivid array of ocean blues and sandy beaches of the surrounding coral reefs.

Its beauty aside, what I found so interesting about these islands was the influence French colonisation and settlement by the Chinese has had on the cuisine. Talk about fusion. A walk through Papeete's market or the roulottes food market – an open-air caravan market – gives you a great insight into this melting pot of cuisines. My favourites are the snack stalls of chow mein baguettes – crunchy French bread packed with stir-fried noodles, meat and vegetables. And I love the simplicity of a heaped plate of steak frites, but where the steak is a large charcoal-seared slab of local mahi mahi.

Instead of competing with one another, the three cuisines have blended, using the best of each. At the fine-dining end, chefs (most of whom are French) use local produce to their advantage, but enhance it with the astounding array of top French products that come in regular supply. We had a stunning meal at Bénédicte and Thierry Sauvage's Le Coco's restaurant on Tahiti's west coast. A dish of scallop, calamari and shellfish with épeautre (spelt) and sepia jus, for example, was very French, but had the essence of the Polynesian ocean I was sitting beside.



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voici tahiti

FIONA SMITH FINDS PLENTY OF FOOD FOR THOUGHT IN THE FUSION CUISINE OF FRENCH POLYNESIA

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY FIONA SMITH / PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON McLEAN / STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

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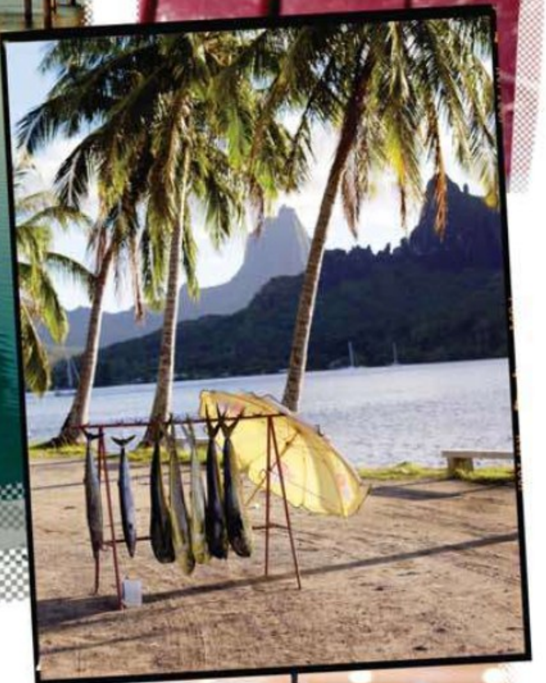

FISH IS A HUGE PART OF TAHITIAN CUISINE. THE CATCH OF THE DAY CAN BE SEEN HANGING ON THE ROADSIDE, BEING SOLD FRESH FOR DINNER

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FISH TARTARE À TROIS
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TAHITI PLANTER'S PUNCH
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STICKY PORK CHOW MEIN BAGUETTE recipe page 96

VANILLA COMPLEMENTS THE SAVOURINESS OF STEAK WELL AND A HINT IN MUSTARD IS JUST RIGHT

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STEAK WITH VANILLA MUSTARD & TARO FRIES recipe page 97

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THERE WAS A GREAT HOMEMADE FEEL ABOUT MUCH OF THE PREPARED FOOD AT THE MARKETS AND THE CAKES WERE PARTICULARLY INVITING

LOUISE HART'S PRUNE CAKE WITH RUM & CHOCOLATE SAUCE
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COCONUT BREAD PUDDING WITH FRESH PINEAPPLE & MANGO PURÉE recipe page 98

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TAHITI PLANTER'S PUNCH

They make a bit of rum on Tahiti – though unfortunately not much with local sugar cane – and it is one of the most popular drinks. You can stop in at the "cellar door" of some distilleries and try the local version, which is sweeter and milder than the export variety. Noa Noa rum is exported to New Zealand, so if you want to be particularly authentic, seek it out at selected liquor stores or you can use other dark rums.

Traditional Jamaican planter's punch consists of lime, sugar, rum and water, but the substitution of fruit juices for water is common. At Opoa Beach Resort on Raiatea, mine included guava and mango juice and our guide on the island, Eric Pelle, makes his with vanilla syrup. I have combined them for this version. Mango and guava are thick juices; if you would like the drink a little lighter, replace half the juice with sparkling water.

- 150ml fresh lime juice (6-8 limes)
- 90ml vanilla syrup (recipe follows)
- 360ml guava juice, chilled
- 360ml mango juice, chilled
- ice cubes
- 180ml dark rum

In a large jug mix the lime juice and vanilla syrup then stir in the guava and mango juices. Half fill 6 x 250ml glasses with ice and pour 30ml of rum over each. Top with the fruit juice mix. Makes 6.

Vanilla Syrup

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup hot water
- 1 vanilla bean, split

Place all the ingredients in a saucepan and bring to the boil over a high heat, stirring until the sugar is completely dissolved. Cool. Remove the vanilla bean before using.

You can make this a few days in advance; store with the vanilla bean still in if you like an intense flavour. Store any left over in the fridge; it will keep for a month. Makes 300ml.

FISH TARTARE À TROIS

Fish is a huge part of Tahitian cuisine. The catch of the day can be seen hanging on the roadside, being sold fresh for dinner – large sea fish like dorado (mahi mahi), barracuda and tuna, and small, colourful reef fish like parrot, soldier and jackfish still shimmering from the ocean as they sway in the breeze. More often than not fish is served as *poisson cru* (raw fish with lime and coconut milk) or huge grilled steaks. Sebastian Philizot, the head chef at Le Méridien Tahiti, takes cooking classes for guests and locals. We made three kinds of fish tartare: scallop, tuna and korori, the meat of the black pearl oyster. The meat is very dense, quite unique and worth seeking out (they regularly have it on the menu at Le Méridien's Le Carré restaurant).

Tartare is a great use of any firm fresh catch. Here I have used salmon instead of korori, but kahawai would also work for any of these recipes, as it is so abundant and fantastic raw. The scallop version only uses the white, so save the roe to add to a seafood salad, pasta or risotto after quickly panfrying. At Le Méridien the tuna was shaped in an egg ring, the scallop came in a little jar and the korori in a bowl along with a lobster samosa and a mango and pineapple salsa. You can serve yours like this or, as I have done, simply in cos lettuce leaves.

If you like your fish a little more "cooked", leave for 15 minutes after adding the lime juice.

Scallop with Vanilla & Orange

- 200g fresh scallops (roe removed)
- juice of 1 lime
- ½ vanilla bean
- finely grated zest of ½ orange
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- salt to taste

Cut the scallops into very small dice, place in a bowl and mix with the lime juice. Scrape the seeds from the vanilla and add to the scallops along with the orange zest and olive oil. Mix well and season with salt.

Tuna with Tomato, Shallots & Celery

- 200g tuna
- juice of 1 lime
- 1 large tomato, quartered and seeded
- 1 small stick celery, strings removed
- 2 small shallots
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- salt to taste

Cut the tuna into very small dice, place in a bowl and mix with the lime juice. Finely chop the tomato, celery and shallots, and add to the tuna along with the olive oil. Mix well and season with salt.

Salmon with Ginger & Garlic

- 200g salmon
- juice of 1 lime
- 1 small clove garlic
- 3cm piece ginger, peeled and grated
- 12 cherry tomatoes, quartered
- lemon olive oil or extra virgin olive oil
- salt to taste

Cut the salmon into very small dice, place in a bowl and mix with the lime juice. Crush the garlic with the back of a knife and very finely chop. Add to the salmon along with the ginger, tomatoes and olive oil. Mix well and season with salt.

To serve

- 12 medium cos lettuce leaves (optional)

Divide each tartare among 4 cos lettuce leaves or bowls, if you prefer. Serves 4 as an entrée or lunch.

STICKY PORK CHOW MEIN BAGUETTE

The Chinese and especially the French have hugely influenced the Polynesian cuisine. All three seem to have absorbed part of each other's cooking into hybrid dishes. One strange but tasty adaptation is the chow mein baguettes you find in the market or in many snack shops. The baking, as in other French colonies, is very good. Somehow in the heat the

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baguettes stay crunchy and the pastries at the early Sunday market were incredibly inviting. Sunday morning is big for the Papeete market, opening at 3am and serving locals preparing for the traditional Sunday brunch. Unlike other days when there are food, crafts and clothing for sale throughout the day, on Sunday it is all wrapped up by 9am. If you can manage an early start, it is worth it to see the stalls of roast and smoked pork and beautiful fresh fish being carved into massive fillets with precision knifework.

I have filled this baguette with sliced barbecued pork based on the dark sticky black pork sold at one stall where the queue stretched past all the other roast pork sellers. I have used crisp noodles as they add a crunch to the sandwich if you serve it immediately, though sometimes I have wrapped the filled rolls in tinfoil for a picnic on the beach, which means the noodles soften, but are still delicious.

- **1 carrot, peeled**
- **1 zucchini**
- **1 tablespoon peanut oil**
- **1 red capsicum, cored and finely sliced**
- **100g oyster mushrooms, sliced**
- **1 clove garlic, crushed**
- **3cm piece ginger, peeled and grated**
- **2 tablespoons soy sauce**
- **1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar**
- **140g crisp noodles**
- **3 spring onions, sliced**
- **1 cup mung beans**
- **½ cup coriander leaves**
- **2 baguettes (save any remainder for another occasion)**
- **mayonnaise or butter for spreading**
- **sticky pork, sliced (recipe follows)**

Using a vegetable peeler or mandoline, cut the carrot and zucchini lengthwise into very fine ribbons.

Heat the oil in a wok over high heat and stir-fry the carrot, zucchini, capsicum, mushrooms, garlic and ginger for 2-3 minutes until soft. Add the soy sauce and vinegar, and stir-fry for another minute. Add the noodles, spring onions, mung beans and coriander, and stir-fry 1-2 minutes until the noodles soften slightly.

Cut the baguettes into 4 x 25cm lengths and spread each with mayonnaise or butter. Fill with the warm chow mein and slices of sticky pork. Makes 4.

Sticky Pork

- **4 tablespoons char siu sauce or hoisin sauce**
- **2 tablespoons soy sauce**
- **1 tablespoon liquid honey**
- **½ teaspoon ground five spice**
- **750g pork steaks**

In a saucepan, combine the char siu or hoisin sauce, soy sauce, honey and five spice then add the pork and mix well to coat. Leave to marinate while you heat up the barbecue.

When the barbecue (or a grill pan) is medium-hot, cook the pork for about 5 minutes on each side (this will depend on the thickness of the steaks).

Meanwhile, bring the remaining marinade to the boil over a high heat and cook for 1-2 minutes until thick.

Put the cooked pork back in the thickened marinade, turning to coat, and leave to cool. Remove and slice when cool. You can cook this the day before and store in the refrigerator.

STEAK WITH VANILLA MUSTARD & TARO FRIES

Vanilla is a highlight of Tahiti's food production and you find it in many dishes. A charming traveller we met on the historic island of Raiatea, had visited there because she had read years before that Raiatea's neighbour, Taha'a, was "the vanilla island, where the perfume fills the air".

These days much of the production is done on Raiatea (but vanilla grows wild on Taha'a) and when we opened the car door outside producer Tahiti Vanille, the heady smell overtook us. The company cures vanilla from the island and supplies many European chefs, such as Joël Robuchon and Alain Ducasse. One of its new products will be a mustard. Vanilla complements the savouriness of steak well and a hint in mustard is just right.

Breadfruit is plentiful but, unlike vanilla, it is not universally popular. Most people have a tree in their garden, but it has fallen out of favour with the introduction of other starches, especially rice and flour.

There is a movement to revive the use of native fruit and vegetables, and I liked the idea of breadfruit gratin by Bertrand, the chef at Le Mayflower in Moorea. Here I have served the steak with fries as they do at the roulottes market and I would make them out of breadfruit if I could get my hands on some, but instead I have used taro, which has the same subtle flavour and dense texture, and makes really crunchy fries.

If you prefer, you can substitute regular or Maori potatoes. Serve the fries with your favourite sauce. At the market, steak and fries come with barbecue sauce. I like mayonnaise, but any fruity sauce or chutney would also be good.

Taro Fries

- **2kg taro**
- **2-3 litres sunflower oil**
- **flaky sea salt to taste**

Wearing gloves, as the oxadates in taro cause irritation if it's handled raw, peel the taro and cut lengthwise into 1cm chips. Place in a bowl of cold water until needed.

Fill a deep-fryer, large saucepan or wok to a third with the oil. Heat the oil to150°C-160°C. It is important to cook taro thoroughly, so do not have the oil too hot at this point or the fries will brown too fast and be uncooked in the centre.

Drain and dry the fries well (I spin them in a salad spinner then pat with a clean tea towel).

Add to the oil and cook for 6 minutes, shaking occasionally. Drain well, shaking as much of the oil off as you can. Leave to cool on crumpled kitchen paper.

Just before serving, increase the oil temperature to 190°C. Add the fries and cook for 2 minutes until crisp and golden. Drain well and toss with salt to taste. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

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Steak with Vanilla Mustard

- 1 vanilla bean
- 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 4 sirloin or scotch fillet steaks at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- flaky sea salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- selection of sauces to serve

Split the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape out the seeds into a small bowl, add the mustard and mix well. Reserve.

Heat the barbecue or a grill pan to very hot.

Rub the steaks with the oil then season with salt and pepper. Cook for 2-4 minutes each side, depending on the thickness and how you like them cooked. Remove from the heat, cover loosely with tinfoil and leave to rest while you finish off the fries (about 6 minutes).

Serve with the fries, vanilla mustard and sauces. Serves 4.

LOUISE HART'S PRUNE CAKE WITH RUM & CHOCOLATE SAUCE

There was a great homemade feel about much of the prepared food at the markets and the cakes looked particularly inviting. I especially liked the idea of moist and fruity prune cake. Our guide for the day, Joel Hart, and his wife, Louise, used to make about 50 prune cakes a week and would get their young sons to sell them around town.

Well out of the baking business now, he was kind enough to give me the recipe. You can serve it plain or perhaps dusted with a little icing sugar, but it is delicious as dessert, served with ice-cream and Tahitian rum and dark chocolate sauce.

- 250g ready-to-eat pitted prunes, chopped
- 60g butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 eggs
- ¾ cup flour, sifted
- 1 teaspoon baking soda, sifted

Preheat the oven to 180°C (or 160°C fan bake). Grease and line a 22cm cake tin.

Put the prunes in a saucepan with 1 cup of water, bring to the boil and boil for 1 minute. Pour the prunes into a sieve over a measuring cup and collect the juice. Set aside to cool. You need 125ml of juice; if you haven't got this, top up with water.

Mix the butter and sugar together in a large bowl with electric beaters then beat in the eggs. Continue beating for about 5 minutes until the mixture is light and the sugar is dissolved. Stir in the cooled prune juice then the flour and baking soda.

Carefully fold in the prunes. Do not overmix; just add and stir a little bit before you pour into the lined tin. Bake for 40 minutes until firm. Rest on a wire rack for 5 minutes before turning out.

Rum & Chocolate Sauce

- 125ml dark rum
- 150g dark chocolate, broken up
- 120ml cream

Place the rum, chocolate and half the cream in a saucepan. Stir over low heat until the chocolate has melted (about 5 minutes). Stir in the remaining cream and cool (if you refrigerate the sauce you will need to reheat it as it thickens when cold).

COCONUT BREAD PUDDING WITH FRESH PINEAPPLE & MANGO PURÉE

If you are not a resort type, pensions are a great alternative accommodation in Tahiti. These little cottages, often part of a family home, are small and welcoming. We visited Chez Yolanda, a beachfront pension, and Yolanda cooked us a traditional meal of jackfish in coconut, breadfruit, yam, fe'i (a small plantain-like red banana that is always used cooked) and ipo (Tahitian coconut bread). It was one of my favourite meals – so simple, with the flavours of each item shining and, let's face it, cook anything in fresh coconut milk and it tastes terrific.

Yolanda makes her coconut bread into dumplings and boils them in a mixture of milk and water. They are lovely, adding creaminess to the steamed breadfruit and yam. I have used her recipe as a dessert – steamed rather than boiled for a tidier result. You need 6 x 150ml heatproof cups (I use Chinese teacups) or ramekins.

- 2 cups desiccated coconut
- 400ml coconut milk
- 2 eggs, beaten
- butter for greasing
- 1¼ cups self-raising flour
- ½ cup caster sugar
- finely grated zest and juice of 1 lime, plus extra zest for decoration (optional)
- 2 cups chopped mango (from 1 large mango)
- ½ fresh pineapple, skin removed

In a bowl combine the desiccated coconut with 200ml of the coconut milk and 100ml water. Leave to soak for 1 hour. Stir in the eggs.

Bring a large saucepan (that has a steamer) of water to the boil. Grease the cups or ramekins with the butter.

Sift the flour and sugar into a bowl and make a well in the centre. Add the soaked coconut mixture and the lime zest. Mix well.

Fill the cups or ramekins with this mixture to about 1cm from the top and place in the steamer. Cover and cook for 30 minutes.

Place the mango in a food processor with the lime juice and purée.

Halve the pineapple lengthwise and slice each half into 6 pieces. Place a coconut bread pudding on each plate, put 2 slices of pineapple on the side and spoon some mango purée over. Top each pudding with a little lime zest if you like and serve with the remaining coconut milk for pouring. Serves 6. ●

Fiona Smith and Aaron McLean flew courtesy of Air Tahiti Nui and were hosted by Tahiti Tourisme (tahiti-tourisme.pf). See cuisine.co.nz for details of where to stay and eat in Tahiti.

Credits: Pewter serving tray, Cosi Tabellini dinner plate and Tony Sly plate from Cranfields; Rosenthal Moon Platinum, Simplicity glass jug from The Studio of Tableware; ceramic dinner and entrée plate from Corso De' Fiori; white linen from Martha's Fabrics. For full details, see Credits Index.

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MUST-HAVE MUSTARDS

The piquancy of mustard lifts many summer foods such as ham and other cold cuts, while the more mellow Dijonnaise is the perfect partner in a chicken sandwich. In this recipe, wholegrain mustard complements the pork and matches the zingy Asian flavours in the salad. Your guests will be keen as mustard for more.

MUSTARD-GLAZED PORK WITH GINGER, NEW POTATO & CORIANDER SALAD

This is a great summer dish where the pork is cooked on the barbecue, if you have one with a lid. If not, place the glazed pork on a lined roasting dish in an oven preheated to 200°C for 15 minutes.

Ginger, New Potato & Coriander Salad

- 2 teaspoons Maille wholegrain mustard
- 1 teaspoon honey
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- juice of 1 lime (2 tablespoons)
- 3 tablespoons peanut oil
- 750g new potatoes, scrubbed
- 1 red onion, very finely sliced
- 3cm piece fresh ginger, peeled and cut into fine matchsticks
- ½ cup (85g) roasted peanuts
- 1 bunch coriander, leaves only

In a small bowl, combine the mustard, honey, salt and lime juice, whisking to dissolve the honey. Whisk in the oil and set aside.

Boil the potatoes in salted water until tender. Drain and, when cool enough to handle, cut into bite-sized pieces, arrange on a serving platter and drizzle with half the dressing.

Place the onion in a bowl of cold water to soak for at least 10 minutes. Drain well.

Just before serving, scatter the ginger, drained onion, roasted peanuts and coriander leaves over the potatoes. Drizzle the remaining dressing over.

Mustard-Glazed Pork

- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons Maille wholegrain mustard
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 3 pork fillets (about 650g)

Heat a barbecue with a lid until hot. In a bowl, mix the sugar, mustard and soy sauce to a paste. Fold the narrow ends of the pork fillets over and tie with string to give an even thickness. Place in a flat dish and coat with half the glaze.

Place the pork on the hot barbecue. Cover and cook for 5 minutes. Turn the pork over and brush with the remaining glaze. Cover and cook a further 4-5 minutes until the meat starts to feel firm but is still a little soft. Remove from the heat, cover loosely with tinfoil and let rest for 5 minutes. Cut into thick slices and serve with the salad. Serves 4.

Credits: Cutlery Noor from The Studio of Tableware. For full details, see Credits Index.

CUISINE PROMOTION

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One of the joys of travelling

is sampling the local street food. After a recent trip to India some of the impressions may have faded, but I vividly remember the flavours of a puri (bread) dipped into a fiery dhal at Kinari bazaar, in Agra, or eating my first chickoo (a potato-like fruit with a sweet musky flavour). There is something about eating food in its local context that brings to life a sense of place. While you can eat terrific food in the hotels, too often it is a watered-down version of what is available outside on the streets.

Here, then, is my version of some of the delicious foods and flavours of that trip. You can mix and match these dishes – you don't need them all for a great feast. And they are all quick to make except for the gol gappa, as you need to make the dough, and the paneer pakora, unless you have bought the paneer. (See a glossary of ingredients on page 109.)

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY GINNY GRANT
PHOTOGRAPHY IN INDIA BY KIERAN SCOTT
FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON McLEAN
STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

A VISIT TO NORTH-WESTERN INDIA WHETS GINNY GRANT'S APPETITE

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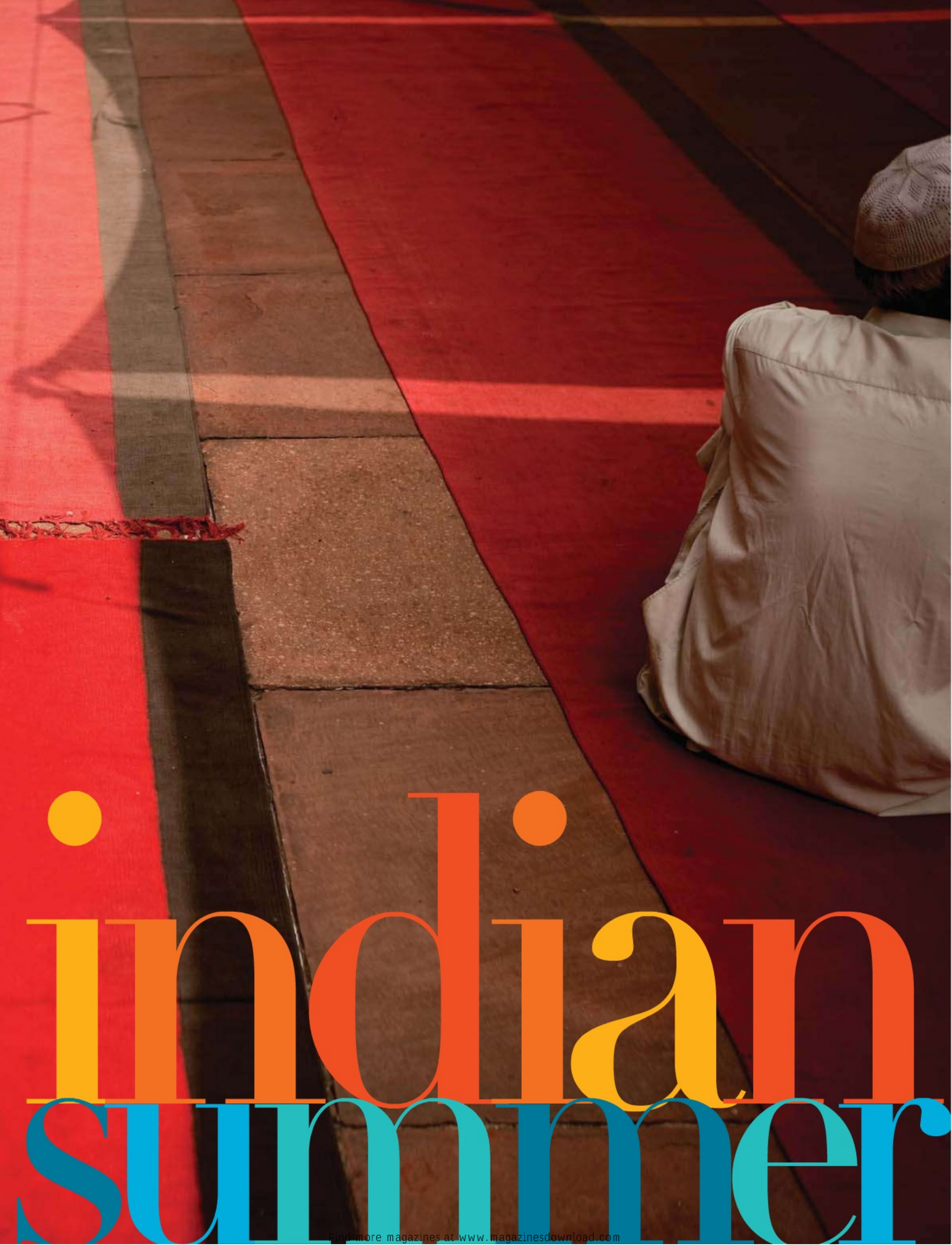
indian summer



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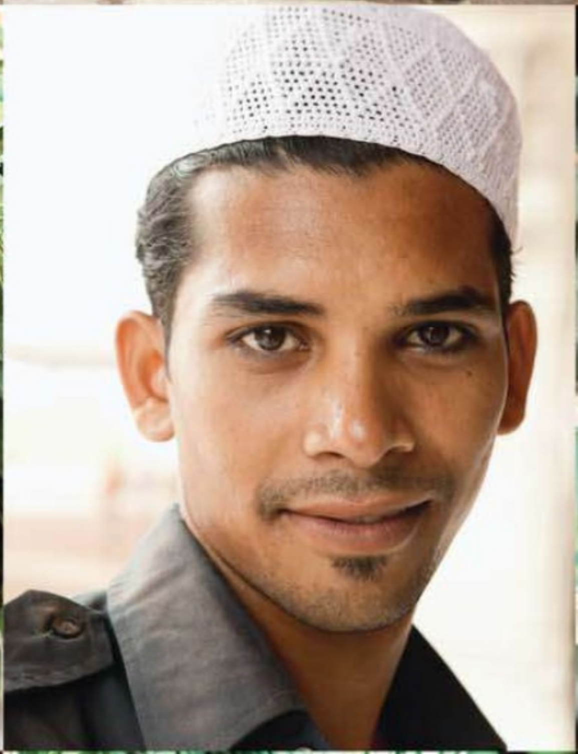

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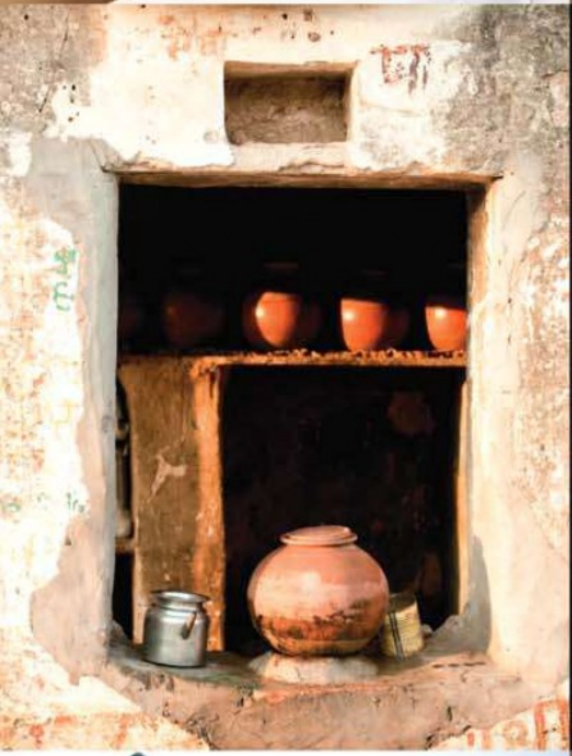

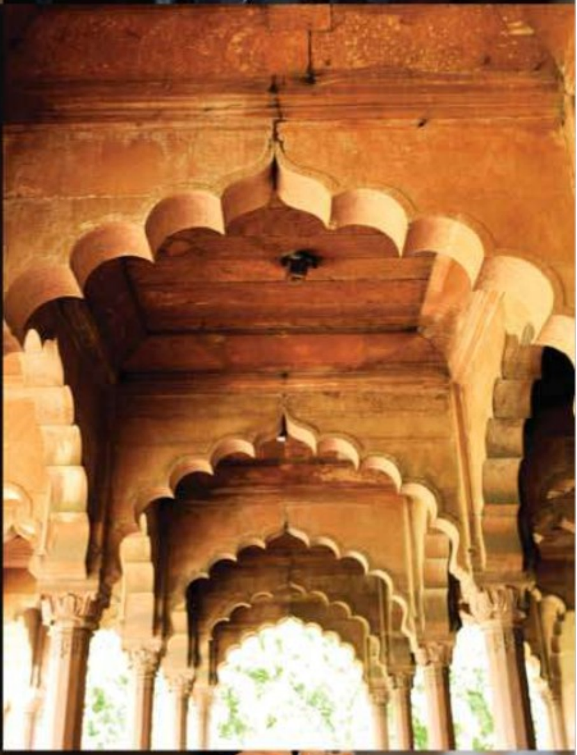

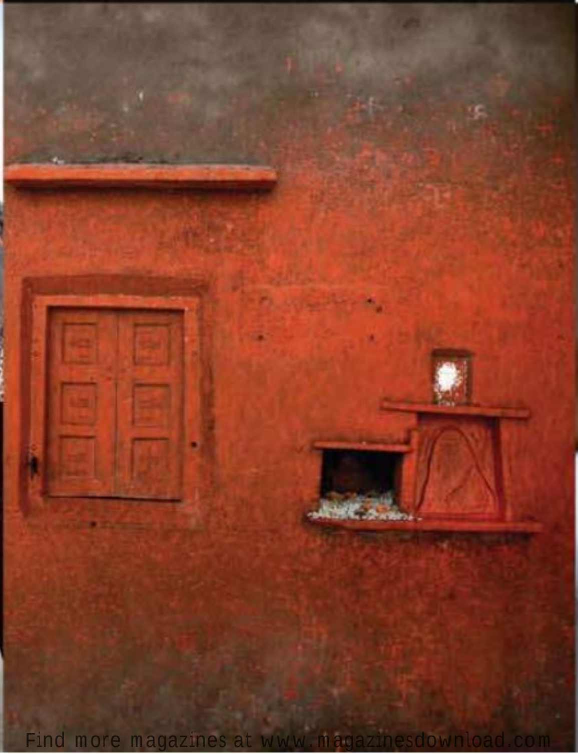

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MANGO & PISTACHIO KULFI

recipe page 110

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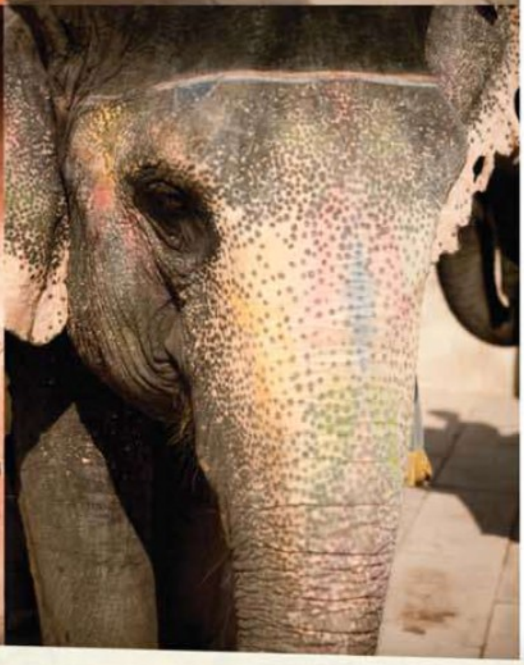

ESSENTIALS

If you are planning to make more than one of these recipes it is worth making a batch of ginger and garlic pastes. Likewise, I make a batch of garam masala to use for all the recipes.

GARAM MASALA

- 2 cinnamon sticks, broken up
- 2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 8 whole cloves
- 2 teaspoons whole black peppercorns
- 20 cardamom pods
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

Toast the cinnamon, cumin, cloves and black pepper. Toast the cardamom, break apart the pods and remove the seeds. Use a mortar and pestle or spice grinder to grind to a powder. Add the nutmeg. Will keep for a week or so in an airtight container.

GINGER PASTE

- 5cm piece ginger, peeled
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil (not olive)

Use a mortar and pestle (or food processor) to pound the ginger to a paste. Place in a small container, cover with oil and keep refrigerated.

GARLIC PASTE

- 2 bulbs garlic, peeled
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil (not olive)

Use a mortar and pestle (or food processor) to pound the garlic to a paste. Place in a small container, cover with oil and keep refrigerated.

GOL GAPPA

Every market stall had these little snacks on offer. Traditionally, the crisp hollow bread is filled with spiced potatoes and tamarind water, and eaten in a single bite. Chef K Pratish Nair at the ITC Mughal in Agra served a version with a particularly potent Bloody Mary. I've twisted his version into a salsa.

Tomato Vodka Salsa

- 1 tablespoon tamarind block soaked in 3 tablespoons boiling water for 20 minutes then pushed through a sieve
- 3 tomatoes, skinned, cored and very finely diced
- 2 tablespoons vodka
- 1 teaspoon palm sugar
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped coriander leaves
- sea salt for seasoning

Combine all the ingredients and season to taste.

For the bread

- 1 cup atta flour
- ¼ cup fine semolina
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons ghee (or oil if you prefer), melted
- 3-4 tablespoons water
- vegetable oil for frying

Mix the flour, semolina and salt together. Rub in the ghee and add enough water to make a stiff dough. Knead for 5 minutes then rest the dough for 30 minutes.

Roll out the dough very thinly and use a small pastry cutter to cut into rounds (or break off small pieces of dough and roll into balls; either use a rolling pin to roll into rounds or press into a thin round).

Fry in batches until puffed and golden. Drain on paper towels.

Break a hole in one side of the bread and place in a small amount of salsa. Eat immediately. Makes around 60.

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PANEER PAKORA

Jetlagged and tired after a full day of sightseeing, we were served these delicious cheese balls with coriander chutney – and tomato ketchup! They were a welcome accompaniment to Kingfisher beer while enjoying the cool of the evening on the rooftop terrace of Bajaj Indian Home Stay in Delhi. Chef Mithu Prasad Tanti kindly passed on the recipe. I have adapted it slightly, adding a touch of parmesan.

- **500g potatoes (I used Agria), scrubbed**
- **300g paneer, crumbled**
- **30g grated parmesan**
- **½ teaspoon ground cumin**
- **½ teaspoon salt**
- **2 tablespoons makai flour, plus extra for dusting**
- **2 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus extra for frying**

Boil the potatoes in salted water until cooked. When cool enough to handle, peel and mash the potatoes with the paneer. Add the parmesan, cumin, salt and makai flour. Mix lightly then incorporate the oil. Roll the mix into small balls, roll in the extra flour and fry in batches in hot oil until golden. Drain on paper towels and cool for a few minutes before serving with the coriander chutney. Makes 60.

Coriander Chutney

- **1 large bunch coriander, stems removed**
- **½ small onion, chopped**
- **1 green chilli, finely chopped**
- **¼ teaspoon salt**
- **½ cup thick yoghurt**
- **juice of 1 lemon**

Place all the ingredients except the lemon juice in a food processor and blend to a smooth paste. Add lemon juice to taste.

MURGH SIMLA MIRCH

Chicken & Green Capsicum Curry

I came across a number of versions of this curry – sometimes the chicken was shredded, or the capsicums were in chunks, and I even had a version served in a thin roti roll with coriander chutney. I've always considered green capsicum an unripe fruit not worthy of eating, but its spicy bitterness works well here.

For the marinade

- **1 tablespoon garlic paste**
- **1 tablespoon ginger paste**
- **1 teaspoon Kashmiri chilli powder**
- **1 teaspoon garam masala**
- **500g chicken thigh meat, skin removed and cut into 5cm chunks**

Combine the garlic, ginger, Kashmiri chilli powder and garam masala. Add the chicken and marinate for 2 hours or overnight.

For the curry

- **2 tablespoons ghee**
- **salt to taste**
- **1 teaspoon cumin seeds**
- **3 onions, sliced**
- **2 green capsicums, cored and sliced**
- **½ teaspoon turmeric**
- **2 green chillies, chopped**
- **1 teaspoon garlic paste**
- **1 teaspoon ginger paste**
- **1 teaspoon Kashmiri chilli powder**
- **2 tomatoes, skinned and diced**
- **2 tablespoons cream**
- **lemon juice to taste**
- **¼ cup chopped coriander leaves**

Heat half the ghee in a medium saucepan. Season the chicken with salt, add to the pan and brown then remove and set aside.

Add the remaining ghee to the pan along with the cumin seeds. Fry for 1 minute then add the onion and capsicums. Fry until soft (around 20 minutes). Add the turmeric, chillies, garlic, ginger and Kashmiri chilli powder, and cook for a few minutes. >

GLOSSARY

You will need to hunt out an Indian supplier for some of the ingredients – especially for the spices – however, I have offered substitutions. Feel free to increase or decrease the amount of chilli in these dishes.

AMCHOOR POWDER Unripened mango is sundried then powdered. It gives a tart acidic flavour to dishes. It you can't find it, use lemon juice instead.

ASAFOETIDA OR HING This pungent resin is usually sold in a powdered form – its aroma dissipates during cooking and it is said to aid digestion.

ATTA FLOUR A finely ground wholemeal flour. If unavailable, use 1 part sifted wholemeal flour with 1 part white flour.

CHANA FLOUR Also called chickpea (besan or gram) flour, a gluten-free flour often used as a thickening and flavouring agent.

GHEE Indian clarified butter. Mughal food is traditionally made with ghee; it adds richness in flavour, taste and aroma. However, if you prefer you could use a vegetable oil instead.

KASHMIRI CHILLI POWDER A bright red chilli powder with a mild flavour. Mostly used as a colouring agent. Substitute paprika if unavailable.

MAKAI FLOUR A yellow corn flour (cornmeal) – not to be confused with common cornflour – which is a starch. If unavailable, use a little flour mixed with a little turmeric to give a golden colour.

PANEER A bland curd cheese. If you can't buy any, it is easy to make. Slowly heat 4 litres of whole milk. When it comes to the boil add ¼ cup lemon juice and stir gently until it separates into curds (this should take 1-2 minutes). Strain through a colander lined with a clean piece of muslin and drain for at least 30 minutes (or you can hang it). Leave to drain longer and press with a heavy weight to make a firmer paneer. Makes about 400g.

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Add the tomatoes and chicken pieces. Cook covered for 10 minutes or until the chicken is cooked. Add the cream, season to taste and add lemon juice to taste if needed. Garnish with fresh coriander. Serves 4 as part of a meal.

BAINGAN KI SABJI
Eggplant & Red Chilli Curry

Quick to prepare, this dry, tangy dish has a good amount of heat and goes well with a side of yoghurt.

- 2 tablespoons tamarind block
- 1 large eggplant
- 2 tablespoons ghee
- 8 curry leaves
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 2 long red chillies, sliced lengthwise into quarters (seeds removed if you like a milder dish)
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons finely sliced mint leaves

Soak the tamarind in 2 tablespoons boiling water for 20 minutes. Push through a fine sieve and set aside.

Cut the eggplant lengthwise into 8 wedges then cut each wedge in half. Heat a wide saucepan over moderate heat and add the ghee. When melted, add the curry leaves and cumin seeds, and cook for 1 minute until fragrant.

Add the eggplant and brown each wedge on all sides. Add the chillies, garam masala and salt, and cook for 5 minutes or until the eggplant is soft then add the strained tamarind, stir through, add the shredded mint and serve immediately. Serves 4 as part of a meal.

CHANA MASALA
Chickpea Curry

I've always thought the best Indian food is vegetarian. Rajasthan, with its poor, arid soil, grows few vegetables, so the diet is based mainly on pulses. I enjoyed a good version of this dish at a humble vegetarian restaurant, Ganesh in Jaipur, although the star foods here were the delicious breads from the tandoor – especially the garlic naan with cumin and coriander.

- 2 tablespoons ghee
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- ½ teaspoon asafoetida (optional)
- 1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon ginger paste
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste
- 1 green chilli, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 2 teaspoons garam masala
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ½ teaspoon amchoor powder
- 2 x 400g cans chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup water

Heat a medium saucepan over a moderate heat and add the ghee. When melted, add the cumin, asafoetida, if using, and black mustard seeds. When the seeds start popping and become fragrant, add the onion and fry until soft (around 10 minutes).

Add the ginger, garlic and chilli, and cook for another 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, garam masala, turmeric and amchoor powder, stir for a minute then add the chickpeas, stirring well to combine. Add the salt and water, cover and simmer gently for 10 minutes. Serves 4 as part of a meal.

SHEEK KEBAB
Minced Lamb Kebabs

Traditionally minced meat was made with the best cuts of meat so it was very soft – reputedly made especially for Nawab Asaf-ud-Daulah, a Mughal emperor and toothless gourmand.

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon ginger paste
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 1 teapoon amchoor powder
- 2 teaspoons Kashmiri chilli powder
- 2 tablespoons yoghurt
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander
- 500g minced lamb
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons chana flour

In a food processor, process the onion, ginger, garlic, garam masala, amchoor powder, Kashmiri chilli powder, yoghurt and coriander to a smooth paste. Add the lamb, salt and chana flour and process again to a smooth paste. Allow the meat to marinate for an hour or so or overnight.

Either shape the meat into small sausage shapes or wrap around skewers (dipping your hands in water will help keep the meat from sticking to your hands). Panfry or barbecue until brown and cooked through. Makes 9 large skewers.

MANGO & PISTACHIO KULFI

Kulfi is an ice-cream made without eggs but with milk that has been reduced for hours. Here I have made a super-fast version using evaporated milk infused with cardamom. I used canned Indian mango purée which has a magnificent flavour and colour. If unavailable, use tinned mangoes in light syrup.

- 375ml can evaporated milk
- 2 cardamom pods, cracked
- 850g can of Indian mango pulp (or use 2 cans mango in syrup and purée with enough of the syrup to make 3 cups)
- 3 tablespoons chopped pistachios
- lime juice to taste

In a small saucepan, heat the milk with the cardamom pods and simmer gently for 10 minutes to allow the flavour to infuse. Cool and strain through a sieve.

Combine with the mango pulp and pistachios and add enough lime juice to taste. Pour into moulds and freeze for at least 3 hours. Remove from the freezer 20 minutes before serving. Serves 6. ●

Credits: Decorative silver plates, blue Crown Lynn plates, gold and pale green saucers and gold-rimmed bowl from Antiques of Epsom; small green bowl and oval green serving plate from Japanese Lifestyle; iittala tumblers from The Studio of Tableware; glass votive candle holder, La Chamba cookware and plate from French Country Collections (for stockists, ph: 0800-503 500); cream and black ceramic bowls from Acland Holdings (for stockists, ph: 09-630 6177); table top from La Cigale. For full details, see Credits Index.

Ginny Grant and Kieran Scott flew Cathay Pacific and were hosted by Adventure World.

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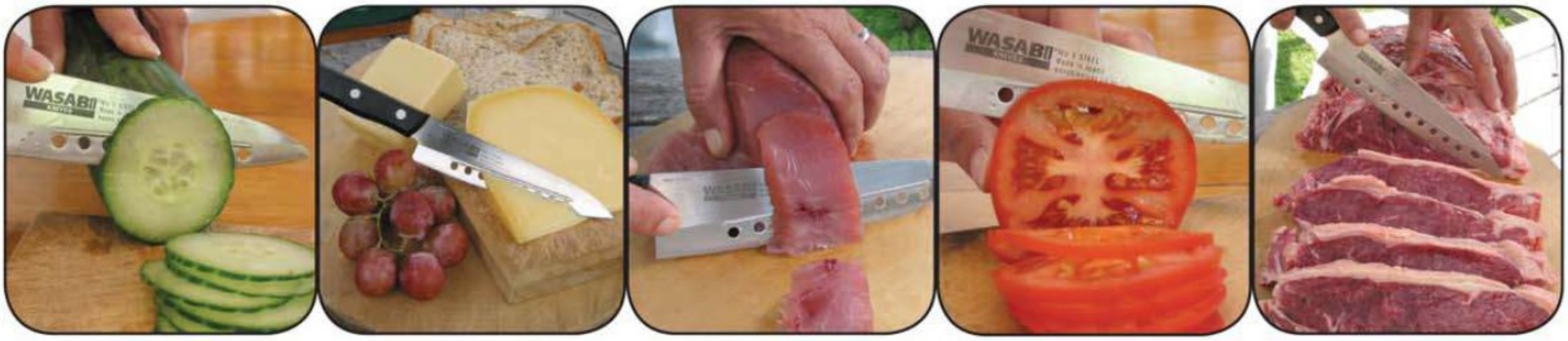

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BEST DRESSED

KATHY SNOWBALL MAKES WARM, MAIN-COURSE SUMMER SALADS

Eating with the seasons is one of the joys of my life. Not only is there a new range of produce to savour, but a chance to vary the styles of cooking.

Summer naturally lends itself to preparing salads. No longer an afterthought, salads can form the basis of a meal and play the leading role. By adding a warm element to salads I find extra depth, plus another layer of flavour and texture. Once you have mastered these salads here, experiment with them: try the lamb backstrap with the barley, the salmon with the chargrilled cos and asparagus, or the burger with the baby spinach and beetroot. The combinations are endless and rewarding – summer will never be the same again.

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY KATHY SNOWBALL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON LOUCAS
STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

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LAMB BACKSTRAP WITH ORANGE, MINT & DATE SALAD
recipe page 118

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BABY SPINACH, WHITE BEAN & BEETROOT SALAD WITH PANFRIED HALOUMI & BALSAMIC DRESSING
recipe page 118

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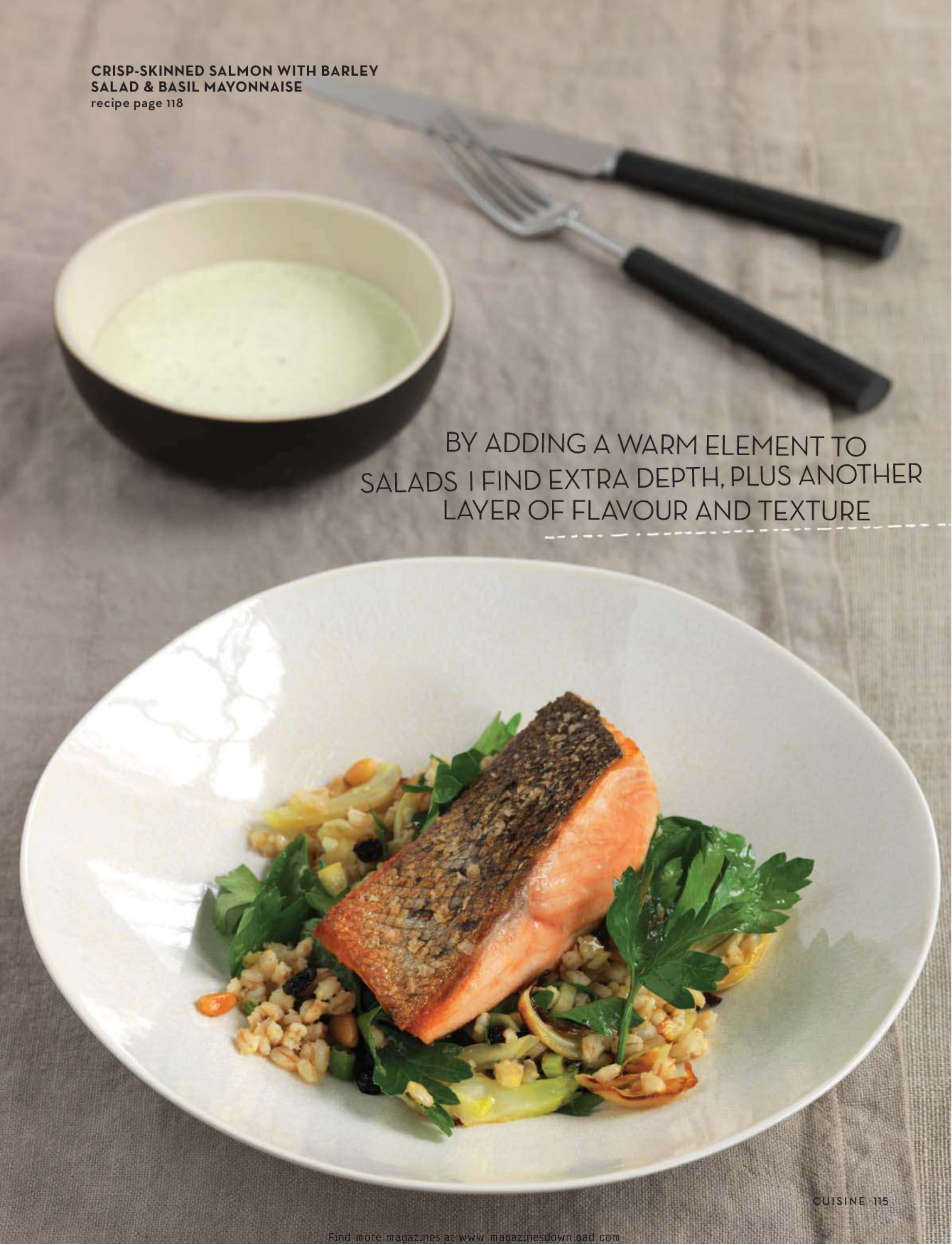

CRISP-SKINNED SALMON WITH BARLEY SALAD & BASIL MAYONNAISE
recipe page 118

BY ADDING A WARM ELEMENT TO SALADS I FIND EXTRA DEPTH, PLUS ANOTHER LAYER OF FLAVOUR AND TEXTURE

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CHARGRILLED COS & CHICKEN SALAD WITH SOFT-BOILED EGGS & ASPARAGUS

recipe page 119

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BURGERS WITH ROASTED EGGPLANT & RED CAPSICUM & MINTED YOGHURT

recipe page 119

NO LONGER AN AFTERTHOUGHT, SALADS CAN FORM THE BASIS OF A MEAL AND PLAY THE LEADING ROLE

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LAMB BACKSTRAP WITH ORANGE, MINT & DATE SALAD

Lamb backstrap is meaty and lean so you don't need a large serving. You could use lamb cutlets, allowing three per person. I have served this with couscous, as it works with the other Mediterranean flavours, but you could try it with potato salad.

For the couscous

- 1 cup instant couscous (such as Tipiak or Sapori Mediterranei)
- grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup boiled peas
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Place the couscous in a heatproof bowl, add 1 cup boiling water, cover with plastic wrap and let stand for 10 minutes. Fluff up with a fork, stir in the lemon zest and juice, oil and peas. Season to taste and set aside.

Orange, Mint & Date Salad

- ⅓ cup lemon juice
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 oranges, peeled with sharp knife, removing the pith, and sliced
- 4 radishes, trimmed and thinly sliced (on a mandoline if you have one)
- 1 red onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 6 fresh dates, pitted and quartered
- ⅓ cup pitted black olives
- ⅓ cup firmly packed mint leaves
- 120g marinated feta, crumbled

Combine the lemon juice and oil and season to taste. Arrange the orange slices on each serving plate and top with radishes, onion, dates, olives and mint leaves. Sprinkle with feta and drizzle with the dressing.

For the lamb and to serve

- 3 x 250g lamb backstraps
- olive oil for rubbing
- 2 cups firmly packed watercress leaves

Rub the lamb with oil, season and chargrill or barbecue over medium-high heat for 2-3 minutes each side for rare. Rest, loosely covered, in a warm place for 5 minutes. Divide the watercress among the plates alongside the salad, top with sliced lamb and serve the couscous in a bowl on the side. Serves 6.

BABY SPINACH, WHITE BEAN & BEETROOT SALAD WITH PANFRIED HALOUMI & BALSAMIC DRESSING

This is a vegetarian dish, but if you want a meat component, add panfried sliced chorizo to the bean mixture. This salad can also be served as an entrée or part of a Greek-style buffet. Just remember that haloumi is best served as soon as it has been fried or it can be rubbery. I like bringing this salad to the table in a large bowl and letting guests help themselves.

A tip: hide the caramelised walnuts, or you will find that they are gobbled up before they make it to the salad.

Balsamic Dressing

- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Combine all the ingredients and season to taste.

For the salad

- 60g walnuts, coarsely chopped
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- pinch of cayenne pepper
- 3 beetroot, trimmed and halved
- 2 x 400g cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed well
- 4 spring onions, finely chopped
- 100g baby spinach leaves
- 1 avocado, stoned and sliced
- 1 large firm pear, quartered, cored and sliced
- olive oil for frying
- 500g haloumi, sliced into 1cm-thick slices

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Place the walnuts on an oven tray, sprinkle with the sugar, salt and cayenne, and roast for 5 minutes or until caramelised.

Wrap the beetroot in tinfoil, place on an oven tray and roast at 200°C for 45 minutes or until tender when pierced with a knife. Remove the foil and when cool enough, rub off the skins and cut each half into 4 wedges.

Combine the beans and spring onions, add half the balsamic dressing and toss gently. Place on serving plates (or on a large platter), and top with spinach, avocado, pear and beetroot.

Heat a little oil in a non-stick frying pan over high heat and fry the haloumi in batches until browned on both sides.

Top the salad with sliced haloumi and serve immediately sprinkled with the walnuts and drizzled with the remaining dressing. Serves 6.

CRISP-SKINNED SALMON WITH BARLEY SALAD & BASIL MAYONNAISE

This dish is delicious and surprisingly light. If you make it in advance, check the seasoning again just before serving as the barley absorbs a lot of flavour and may need a boost. You can use other fish instead of salmon – kingfish works well. Leaving the skin on and crisping it with a little salt is not only delicious, but good nutritionally. I also like to poach a whole salmon to serve with this salad for a larger group.

Barley Salad

- 1 bulb fennel, trimmed, cored and sliced
- ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for tossing
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup pearl barley
- ¼ cup currants
- ¼ cup roasted pine nuts
- 4 spring onions, chopped
- ¼ preserved lemon flesh, chopped
- grated zest of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 cups firmly packed flat-leafed parsley leaves

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Place the fennel on an oven tray, toss with a little olive oil and season to taste. Roast for about 20 minutes, turning occasionally, or until the fennel is lightly browned. Set aside to cool.

Cook the barley in simmering water for 35 minutes or until tender. Drain and rinse under cold water then, in a

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large bowl, combine the barley, fennel, ⅓ cup olive oil and the remaining ingredients, except the parsley. Toss gently and season to taste. Just before serving stir in the parsley.

Basil Mayonnaise

- 2 egg yolks
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 200ml light olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped basil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Combine the egg yolks, lemon juice and mustard in a food processor then, with the motor running slowly, add the oil in a thin stream until the mixture is thick. Add the basil and 2 tablespoons of water, and process until smooth. Season to taste and set aside.

For the salmon and to serve

- sea salt to taste
- 6 x 180g salmon fillets, skin on
- extra virgin olive oil for frying

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Sprinkle sea salt generously over the skin of the salmon then fry skin side down in a hot pan with a little oil until the skin is browned and crisp. Turn the salmon over, transfer to an oven tray and roast skin side up for 7 minutes.

Divide the barley salad among the serving plates and top each with a portion of warm salmon. Drizzle with basil mayonnaise or serve it alongside. Serves 6.

CHARGRILLED COS & CHICKEN SALAD WITH SOFT-BOILED EGGS & ASPARAGUS

This salad is so colourful and looks great piled on a large platter to place in the centre of the table. If you want to be adventurous you can substitute quail for the chicken and use quail eggs. Allow one quail, cut in half, per person. I like to drink a cool-climate Shiraz with this dish, but Pinot Noir and Chardonnay also work well.

Mustard Dressing

- 2 teaspoons wholegrain mustard
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped French tarragon
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Combine all the ingredients and season to taste.

For the salad

- 18 baby roma or cherry tomatoes, halved
- extra virgin olive oil for brushing
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 eggs
- 24 asparagus spears, tough ends trimmed
- 6 large skinned and boned chicken thighs
- 12 thin slices prosciutto
- 3 baby cos lettuce, outer leaves removed and heads quartered
- toasted sourdough to serve

Preheat the oven to 150°C. Place the tomatoes on an oven tray, brush with oil, season then roast for 30 minutes.

Place the eggs in a saucepan, cover with water and bring to a simmer. Simmer gently for 5 minutes then plunge the eggs into cold water for 5 minutes. Carefully peel.

Cook the asparagus in simmering salted water for 2-3 minutes then drain and rinse under cold water.

Halve the chicken thighs and wrap in prosciutto. Heat a little oil in a non-stick pan and fry the chicken until browned all over. Place on an oven tray and roast at 200°C for 10-15 minutes.

Brush the lettuce with a little of the dressing then cook on a hot chargrill until just wilted. Serve the lettuce, tomatoes and chicken with halved eggs, asparagus and sourdough on the side. Drizzle with dressing. Serves 6.

BURGERS WITH ROASTED EGGPLANT & RED CAPSICUM & MINTED YOGHURT

This is a flash Mediterranean-style hamburger, without the bun. I have served the burger on a bed of crushed chickpeas for texture, but you could use hummus for a similar flavour. This makes great picnic or barbecue food and goes well with a full-bodied Shiraz.

- 1 cup yoghurt
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped mint
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 400g can chickpeas, drained and rinsed well
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 750g minced beef
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 large (350g) eggplant, cut into 2cm pieces
- 2 red onions, cut into 2cm pieces
- 2 red capsicums, cored and cut into 2cm pieces
- ¼ cup olive oil, plus extra for brushing
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 cups wild rocket leaves
- grilled flatbread to serve

Combine the yoghurt, 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice and the mint. Season to taste. Refrigerate until serving.

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Crush the chickpeas coarsely with a potato masher, leaving some whole. Stir in the tahini, garlic, remaining lemon juice and the oil, and season to taste. Set aside.

Combine the mince, onion and allspice, season to taste and mix well. Shape the mixture into 6 burgers.

Place the eggplant, onion and red capsicum in a roasting pan, toss with ¼ cup oil and roast in the oven for 30-40 minutes, turning occasionally. Remove from the oven and stir in the balsamic vinegar.

Brush the burgers with oil and grill, panfry or barbecue on both sides until browned and cooked to your liking (3-4 minutes each side for medium).

Spoon the chickpea mixture on to plates, top each with a burger and some rocket, and serve the eggplant mixture on the side. Smear minted yoghurt around the plates and drizzle the whole dish with a little extra oil. Serve with grilled flatbread. Serves 6. •

Credits: Linen from Siena; Open Up tumbler, organic ceramic plate and pasta bowl from Nest; cream and black ceramic bowl from Acland Holdings (ph: 09-630 6177 for stockists); Cutipol Ebony cutlery from The Studio of Tableware. For full details, see Credits Index.

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QUICK

SUMMERTIME AND THE COOKING IS EASY, SAYS **RAY McVINNIE**

Finding easy ideas

when the weather is hot and your appetite is a bit dulled can be hard but, as food commentator Michael Pollan has remarked, that is no reason to let food corporations or 16-year-old burger flippers cook your meals. Home cooking doesn't have to be complicated as I hope these ideas will show. Good meals are often a couple of simple techniques using good ingredients layered into one dish.

* Boil some new **potatoes**, drain, crush slightly and toss with **rocket leaves** (so they wilt), **lemon zest** and **juice**, good-quality pitted **black olives**, plain **unsweetened yoghurt**, **extra virgin olive oil**, and chopped **mint** and **parsley**. Taste and season. Serve with **tomatoes** that have been rubbed with **olive oil**, seasoned well and roasted in a hot oven until starting to collapse and your favourite fried or barbecued **fish**.

* Wok-fry some **squid rings** over high heat in a little **soybean oil** until browned and serve as a salad tossed with diced **cucumber**, halved **cherry tomatoes**, sliced **spring onions**, chopped roasted **peanuts**, lots of **coriander** sprigs and warm **rice noodles** with a dressing of **sweet chilli sauce** mixed with **lime juice** and **zest**, and **fish sauce**.

* Gently panfry **duck breasts** for 8 minutes on the skin side, 4 minutes on the flesh side then remove from the pan and rest. Pour the fat out of the pan and keep for another use (see below). Roast some stoned, peeled **peach** or **nectarine** halves and lots of sliced **parsnips** until well browned and just tender. Slice the duck and serve with the fruit and parsnips with a big drizzle of your best **balsamic vinegar** and grilled **sourdough bread** spread with **sour cream** on the side. Follow with a big **green salad**.

* Peel lots of **Agria potatoes**, cut into chunks and mix with plenty of **duck fat** and some peeled whole cloves of **garlic**. Spread out in a big roasting pan and roast at 200°C for about 1 hour until the potatoes are crisp and golden. Serve with panfried **steak** cooked the way you like it and a **vinaigrette** with lots of chopped **tomatoes**, **basil**, **red onion** and **capers** stirred into it.

* Make a tabouleh salad from soaked, squeezed **bulgur wheat**, lots of chopped **parsley**, **mint**, **tomatoes**, **lemon zest** and **juice**, **extra virgin olive oil** and toasted **sesame seeds**. Serve with barbecued or panfried meatballs made of well-seasoned minced **lamb** mixed with a little chopped **garlic** and ground **cinnamon**. Serve with well-seasoned plain **unsweetened yoghurt** mixed with chopped **garlic** and **mint**.

* Line a flan tin with **flaky pastry** and refrigerate. Put lots of flaked **smoked fish** in a bowl, add 3-4 beaten **eggs**, a tub of **sour cream**, chopped **dill** and **spring onions**, and some **capers**. Mix well, pour into the pastry shell and bake at 190°C until the pastry is well cooked and the filling set and browned. Serve with **Dijon mustard** and a big platter of steamed **asparagus** with a **lemon vinaigrette**.>

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RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY RAY McVINNIE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIERAN SCOTT
STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

* Panfry haloumi cheese in olive oil until well browned then serve with steamed rice and a chunky sauce of diced vine-ripened tomatoes, seeded cucumber, red onion, a little finely chopped garlic, pitted black olives, lemon zest and juice, chopped dill and extra virgin olive oil.

SMART

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SPICED FISH ON SAFFRON BRAISED POTATOES WITH PEAS

Fish fillets are here dusted with ground and whole spices, panfried and served with Agria potatoes braised in saffron-infused stock. The saffron is optional if you want to economise; potatoes baked only in stock are a delicious classic recipe. All it needs with it are boiled peas and lemon wedges, and a green salad to follow.

- **3 tablespoons toasted cumin seeds**
- **2 tablespoons toasted coriander seeds**
- **3 tablespoons poppy seeds**
- **large pinch of hot chilli flakes**
- **flaky sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- **½ teaspoon saffron threads**
- **500ml vegetable stock (I used Rapunzel powdered organic vegetable bouillon)**
- **1 tablespoon butter**
- **800g peeled floury potatoes, sliced 1cm thick**
- **800g skinned and boned firm white fish fillets (I used monkfish)**
- **olive oil for frying**
- **1½ cups peas**
- **lemon wedges for serving**

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Grind the cumin and coriander seeds coarsely and place in a shallow bowl with the poppy seeds and chilli flakes. Season and reserve.

Place the saffron in a small frying pan and carefully toast it until you can just smell it. Remove immediately to a clean, dry saucer. Powder the saffron with dry fingertips. Put the stock in a saucepan, add the saffron and bring to the boil. Rub the butter over the bottom of an ovenproof dish that is big enough to hold the potatoes about 4 slices deep.

Pour the stock over the top and place in the oven for 40-50 minutes, basting occasionally, until the potato is tender and the top slices browned and crisp.

Dust the fish lightly in the spice mixture and fry in a little oil until golden on each side. Place the fish on an ovenproof tray and place in the oven for a few minutes until just cooked.

Boil the peas in plenty of well-salted water for 3 minutes and drain.

Remove the potatoes from the oven and serve the fish on the potatoes with a little of the broth spooned over, the peas sprinkled on top and lemon wedges on the side for squeezing. Serves 6.

✱ Panfry diced **pancetta**, a pinch of **chilli flakes**, chopped **onions**, sliced **fennel** and **green olives** until the **onions** are soft. Add scrubbed live **mussels** and a can of crushed **tomatoes**. Mix, cover and simmer until the mussels open. Serve tossed through **spaghetti** that has been boiled in plenty of **well-salted water** until al dente then drained.

✱ Warm plenty of **hummus** (canned **chickpeas** blended with **garlic**, **lemon juice**, toasted **sesame seeds** or **tahini** and **extra virgin olive oil**) and spread it on a warm platter. Surround with plenty of warm **green beans** and sliced roasted **red capsicums**. Rub **lamb racks** with **garlic** and **olive oil**, panfry until browned, finish in the oven, rest, slice into cutlets and place on the hummus. Put the pan on high heat and, to make gravy, add a big splash of **white wine**, let it bubble then add **beef jus** and boil until slightly syrupy. Pour this over the lamb and sprinkle with toasted **sesame seeds** and chopped **parsley**. >

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✱ Peel and cut **Agria potatoes** into wedges, toss in **olive oil** and roast in a 200°C oven for 1 hour until golden and crisp. Serve with a sandwich of panfried thin-sliced **garlicky sirloin** or **rump steak**, fried **onions**, sliced **tomatoes**, **cos lettuce** and toasted **sourdough bread** spread with **gorgonzola** or other **blue cheese**. Spicy **chutney** on the side.

✱ Not quick, but smart – place a boned leg of **lamb** in a casserole, add **baby onions**, **carrots**, sliced **celery**, a can of crushed **tomatoes**, chopped **anchovies**, **new potatoes**, a big sprig of **rosemary** and 750ml **red wine**. Cover and place in a 175°C oven for 3 hours until the lamb is falling apart. Skim off the fat and serve with lots of al dente **orzo pasta** and crumbled **feta** followed by a salad of **radicchio**, **cos lettuce** and thin-sliced **plums** and **red onions** dressed with **balsamic** and **extra virgin olive oil**.

✱ Slow-fry sliced **white button**, **brown button** and **Portobello mushrooms** and rehydrated **dried porcini** with **garlic** and chopped **bacon** in **extra virgin olive oil**. Toss this through al dente **Italian short pasta** with a big dollop of **mascarpone** and grated **Italian parmesan**. Follow with a **green salad**.

✱ Slash a couple of whole **gurnard** to the bone on each side. Place in a roasting pan with plenty of par-boiled **new potatoes**, **green olives**, **capers**, chopped **anchovies**, **cherry tomatoes**, **thyme**, a splash of **white wine** and a big splash of **extra virgin olive oil**. Roast in the oven until the fish is cooked and potatoes tender. Serve at the table straight from the roasting dish.

✱ Mix minced **pork** with chopped raw **prawns**, finely chopped **ginger**, **garlic** and an **egg white**, season well, form into small patties and barbecue. Serve on hot steamed **rice** with a salad of warm boiled **green beans**, crushed roasted **cashews**, halved **cherry tomatoes**, diced **pawpaw**, sliced **spring onions** and a dressing of **lime juice**, **sesame oil**, **fish sauce**, and **sugar** to taste. Sprinkle with crisp bought fried **shallots**.

✱ Stuff a **free-range chicken** with crushed drained canned **cannellini beans**, plenty of **spinach** and **silverbeet leaves** that have been wilted in boiling water, cooled, squeezed dry and chopped, chopped **garlic** and **parsley**, and finely diced **preserved lemon peel**. Place in an oven dish, drizzle with **olive oil** and **season** well. Place thick-sliced **carrots**, and chunks of **potatoes** and **pumpkin** around the chicken and roast until done. Remove the chicken and vegetables from the pan and keep warm. Pour off the fat and add plenty of **white wine**, boil, scrape up the caramelised meat juices with a wooden spoon, taste, season and pour over the chicken. Serve with **buttered green peas**.

✱ Steam lots of diced **floury potatoes** until just tender, toss in **butter** and **mint** and serve with well-seasoned boiled **green peas** that have been puréed with a dollop of **crème fraîche**, and **garlicky** panfried boneless **free-range chicken thighs** with a sauce of fresh **sage leaves** fried in **butter** and **lemon juice**.

✱ Slow-roast boned **pork belly** with **star anise**, **ginger**, **garlic**, a **cinnamon stick** and **black pepper** until tender and the skin crisp. Serve sliced with steamed long-grain **rice**, lots of stir-fried **Chinese greens** and a jar of **Chinese plum sauce** mixed with fresh **lime juice** on the side.

✱ Panfry thin **pork chops** until well browned and cooked through. Remove from the pan and add diced roasted **red capsicum**, finely chopped **red onion**, **gherkins** and **capers**, and fry gently until the onion is soft. Add **white wine**, let it bubble then **beef jus** and a big spoonful of **wholegrain mustard**. Boil until slightly syrupy. Serve with a **green vegetable** and steamed **potatoes**.

✱ Poach **salmon fillet** in simmering water with a few slices of **onion**, a sprig of **parsley** and some **black peppercorns**. Remove from the liquid, place on a dish and serve with finely grated **beetroot** mixed with **horseradish cream** and **sour cream**. Fried boiled **potatoes** and a simple **cos lettuce** and **spring onion** salad on the side .

✱ Place a thick layer of sliced floury potatoes in an oven dish. Put **free-range chicken drumsticks** on top side by side and tuck some sliced **chorizo** between them. Sprinkle with chopped **garlic**, **black olives**, **salt**, **pepper** and smoked **Spanish paprika**. Add enough **chicken stock** to cover the potatoes. Cover and bake 1 hour at 190°C. Uncover and bake a further 15 minutes. Serve with a salad of chopped **tomatoes**, **spinach** and **rocket**, **croûtons**, and a **sherry vinegar** and **extra virgin olive oil** dressing.

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BARBECUED LAMB FILLETS WITH SASSOUN & SPINACH COUSCOUS

Lamb and couscous is a meal I always enjoy. Instead of making a traditional long-cooked tagine, I have barbecued what is probably the quickest-cooking cut of lamb, the tenderloin or fillet. The sauce has the two flavours I enjoy with lamb, anchovies and mint. And the lemony spinach couscous goes well with all sorts of grilled food.

This is just three simple operations: the sauce, barbecued lamb fillets and instant couscous tossed with lemony wilted spinach.

Sassoun

This is based on a recipe given to me by writer Peta Mathias, which is from her glamorous cookschool in southern France and is one of the best things I have tasted in years.

- 75g roasted almonds
- 8 anchovy fillets
- ½ teaspoon toasted fennel seeds
- 2 cups mint leaves, plus extra for serving
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leafed parsley
- 3 tablespoons water
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil

Put everything except the oil in a food processor or mortar. Process or pound to a coarse paste. Slowly add the oil while processing until all incorporated. Taste and season.

For the lamb and couscous

- 12 lamb fillets (also called tenderloins), trimmed of fat and sinew
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 300g instant couscous (I use Tipiak as it is the one that works best made in the following easy way)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- finely diced peel of ¾ preserved lemon
- 3 handfuls baby spinach leaves

Put the lamb in a bowl and add the olive oil, garlic and pepper. Mix well and reserve.

Place the couscous in a heatproof bowl and season. Add enough boiling water to cover, quickly mix, cover tightly with tinfoil or a plate and set aside for 25 minutes.

Grill the lamb on a hot barbecue for about 3 minutes on each side then remove and rest in a warm place.

Heat the extra virgin olive oil in a frying pan (you could put the pan on a hot barbecue). When hot but not smoking, add the lemon peel and spinach. Stir-fry, without browning, until the spinach has wilted. Season and remove from the heat. Uncover the couscous and fluff it up with a fork, breaking up any lumps. Add the lemon peel and spinach. Mix well.

Slice each lamb fillet into 3 or 4 pieces on the diagonal and serve with the couscous topped with extra mint and the sassoun on the side. Serves 6. ●

Credits: La Chamba plate from French Country Collections (for stockists, ph: 0800-503 500). For full details, see Credits Index.

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course you can do it.

KATHY PATERSON PREPARES A SIMPLE YET IMPRESSIVE THREE-COURSE DINNER FOR SIX

shopping

GROCERIES • egg • cornflour • canola oil • fish sauce • golden granulated sugar • cinnamon stick • orange and pineapple juice • whole nutmeg • sour cream • vanilla ice-cream

FISH & MEAT • smoked salmon • chicken • chicken stock

ALCOHOL • dark rum

FRESH PRODUCE • carrots • orange kumara • spring onions • dill • watercress • coriander • garlic • chilli • ginger • tomatoes • limes • pineapple • papaya • kiwifruit • oranges • grapes

wine match

STARTER Sauvignon Blanc with fresh citrus and passionfruit flavours

MAIN Gewürztraminer works well with ginger and chilli

STARTER

KUMARA & CARROT FRITTERS WITH SMOKED SALMON

- 250g carrots, peeled
- 500g kumara, peeled (I used orange kumara)
- 1 egg
- 4 tablespoons cornflour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 spring onions, finely chopped
- small bunch dill, chopped
- 50ml canola oil
- 12 slices cold-manuka-smoked salmon
- 6 teaspoons sour cream
- watercress or other green to garnish

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Grate the carrot and kumara on a coarse grater and place in a colander to drain for 10 minutes.

In a large bowl, whisk together the egg, cornflour, salt and pepper. Stir in the spring onions, dill, grated carrot and kumara. Divide the mixture into 6 even-sized balls then press firmly to flatten to about 1cm thick.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a moderate heat and fry the fritters on both sides until golden, pressing them down with a metal spatula as they cook. Place the fritters on an oven tray lined with baking paper and place in the oven for 15 minutes until cooked through.

Serve warm or leave to cool before placing a fritter on each of 6 serving plates, top each with 2 slices of smoked salmon, 1 teaspoon of sour cream and top with a little watercress.

MAIN

CHICKEN DRUMSTICKS WITH GARLIC, GINGER & CHILLI PASTE

- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger
- 1 small red chilli, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 bunch coriander (4 large roots, roots finely chopped and leaves coarsely chopped)
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 12 chicken drumsticks
- 500ml chicken stock, hot
- 1 punnet (250g) cherry tomatoes
- 1-2 teaspoons fish sauce
- salt to taste

Preheat the oven to 180°C. In a small bowl, mix together the garlic, ginger, chilli and coriander roots (reserve the leaves). Add 1 tablespoon of the oil to make a paste. Reserve.

Heat a frying pan over a moderate heat. Brush the chicken legs with the remaining oil and cook until golden brown on both sides. Place in a baking dish, spread the paste evenly over each drumstick and bake for 15 minutes.

Pour the stock into the baking dish with the chicken and cook a further 10 minutes. Scatter in the tomatoes and cook another 10 minutes or until the juices run clear when the chicken is poked with a knife. Taste and season with fish sauce and salt, if necessary. Serve with rice and a green salad, and garnish with coriander leaves.

DESSERT

TROPICAL FRUIT IN RUM PUNCH

- 115g golden granulated sugar
- ½ small stick cinnamon
- finely grated zest and juice of 2 limes
- 120ml each of orange and pineapple juice
- 50ml-100ml dark rum (according to taste)
- mixed tropical fruit (I used 1 papaya, ½ pineapple, 3 kiwifruit, 3 oranges, 1 bunch seedless grapes), peeled and cut into even-sized pieces
- fresh nutmeg for grating
- vanilla ice-cream for serving

Put the sugar, cinnamon and 275ml water in a small saucepan, add the lime zest and stir over a low heat until the sugar has dissolved. Leave to cool.

Place the fruit in a large bowl. Strain in the cold syrup with the lime juice, fruit juices and rum.

Divide the fruit and juice among 6 serving bowls and grate a little fresh nutmeg over. Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice-cream or lightly whipped cream, if desired. •

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON McLEAN

Credits: Thomas Loft White dinnerware, Hiram Wild Jesmond and Kings cutlery from The Studio of Tableware. For full details, see Credits Index.

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tips

- Try not to overcrowd the pan when cooking fritters as you need space to turn them over.
- Use crème fraîche as an alternative to sour cream.
- Pass around the black pepper and wedges of lemon.
- Use any cut of chicken on the bone, but allow for a different cooking time and increase the quantity of paste.
- The chicken looks great served in a large colourful shallow bowl placed in the centre of the table.
- Mango and passionfruit can be used in the tropical fruit.

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NUT OILS

A nut oil can bring out the best in a simple green salad, adding undertones of the nut, rich flavour and sweetness, whether it be walnut, almond, hazelnut or macadamia. Yes, there are other nut oils, but you'll be hard pressed to find them in New Zealand – from sublime pistachio and argan, much used in Morocco in salads, couscous and for dipping bread in, to the heinously expensive pine nut oil).

All nut oils are expensive – if they aren't then they are most likely cut with cheap, flavourless filler oils. Also, nut oils have a short shelf life – half a year to a year – so buy in small quantities. Delicate nut oils turn rancid easily and, as with all oils, they should be stored in cool, dark places. They can be refrigerated – note that the oil will solidify – just bring them to room temperature before using.

In France, walnuts and hazelnuts are roasted before the oil is extracted, making for darker oils with toasty flavours, while most New Zealand oils are cold-pressed, giving more delicate flavours.

Nut oils tend to have a low smoke point, making them unsuitable for frying or heating as they lose flavour and can become bitter. Hence, most are used in salad dressings or at the end of cooking, drizzled over dishes like pasta, soups and risottos where the heat releases the nutty aromas. Macadamia oil is the exception – it has a high smoke point, thanks to high levels of antioxidants and low levels of polyunsaturated fats, and can be used in frying and baking.

STOCKFOOD/PHOTONEWZEALAND

- Try using nut oil instead of olive oil in your favourite vinaigrette – the richer flavour means you'll need less oil and it is very good with bitter leaves such as radicchio, rocket and witloof.
- Drizzle a little nut oil over blue cheese and serve with honeycomb (or add some crumbled blue cheese to a salad dressed with nut oil).
- Garnish winter soups with a little nut oil – root vegetables such as parsnip and celeriac are particularly good partners.
- Toss hot, steamed vegetables such as green beans in a little walnut oil and scatter fresh walnuts over the top.
- Drizzle hazelnut oil over dukkah-crusted fish or chicken once cooked.
- Roasted apricots (or other stone fruit) served with crumbled meringues and walnuts are even better when drizzled with a little walnut oil (or use macadamias and macadamia oil).

GINNY GRANT

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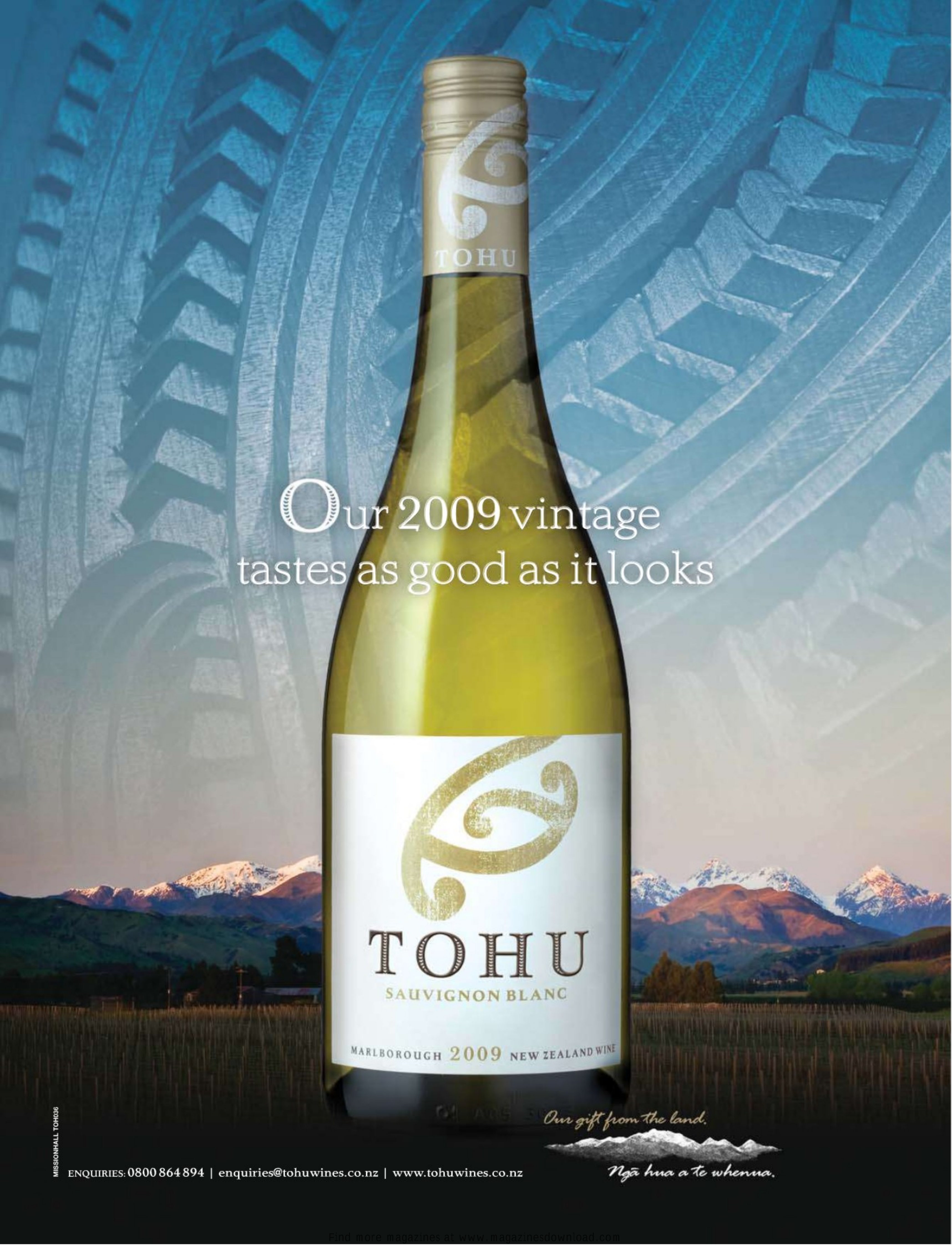

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Edited by Susan Buchanan

BLANC PAGE

"YOU CREATED THIS UNIQUE STYLE – THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THE STORY IS ALSO YOURS TO WRITE."

– AUSTRALIAN WINE JUDGE NICK STOCK LAYS DOWN A CHALLENGE AT THE START OF OUR SAUVIGNON BLANC TASTING. THE PANEL WENT ON TO DISCOVER NEW TWISTS IN THE PLOT, WRITES **JOHN SAKER**

NZ SAUVIGNON BLANC • ROSÉ

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AFTER THE DIFFICULT, AMPLE 2008 SAUVIGNON BLANC VINTAGE, ALL EYES – AND NOSES – WERE ON 2009.

By the end of a long tasting, Nick Stock was impressed with the overall quality of the 2009s. "The New Zealand winemaking community is loved for its fearlessness in tackling new frontiers. I like the direction the 2009 Kiwi Sauvignon vintage has taken. There's better balance, more aromatic complexity... the 2009s are more complete and less mono-directional than recent vintages." Of the 215 wines tasted, 34 won four stars or more. The range of styles and level of sophistication delighted John Belsham. "We've honed in on wines with structure, balance and harmony."

BEST BUYS

NZ SAUVIGNON BLANC

★★★★★ HARWOOD HALL MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 **$18-$20**

★★★★★ INVIVO SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 **$17-$19**

★★★★★ MONTANA MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 **$16.95-$17.95**

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★★★★★ THE SISTERS SINGLE VINEYARD SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 **$17-$19.99**

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★★★★½ KINGFISHER BAY SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 **$9.99**

★★★★ W5 MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 **$12.99**

TASTING RESULTS

NZ SAUVIGNON BLANC

5 STARS OUTSTANDING	13
4½ STARS EXCELLENT	9
4 STARS VERY GOOD	12
3 STARS GOOD	59
NO AWARD	122
TOTAL	**215**

KEN DOWNIE

TASTING PANEL

Such is the fondness of Australians for New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, and with an increase in trans-Tasman wine traffic, it is becoming customary for an Aussie judge to be included on our Sauvignon panel. This year chair John Belsham, international judge and owner of Foxes Island Wines, invited Melburnian Nick Stock. One of Australia's most prolific wine commentators, Stock is the author of the *Penguin Good Australian Wine Guide* and was awarded World's Best Drinks Journalist in 2007 at the World Food Media Awards. Joining them was the experienced Jim Harré, chairman of judges for the New World Wine Awards and a wine consultant for Air New Zealand, who also offers tutored tastings at The Gates Country Lodge, his luxury North Canterbury retreat. Associate judge was Jane Boyle, product strategy manager at New Zealand Wine Cellars.

BOTTLE PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON CREAGHAN, FAIRFAX STUDIOS

top 10

NZ SAUVIGNON BLANCS

1. ★★★★★ MUD HOUSE SWAN MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009
2. ★★★★★ INVIVO SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009
3. ★★★★★ THE SISTERS SINGLE VINEYARD SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009
4. ★★★★★ SAINT CLAIR PIONEER BLOCK 3 43 DEGREES SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009
5. ★★★★★ SAINT CLAIR PIONEER BLOCK 2 SWAMP BLOCK SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009

6= ★★★★★ HARWOOD HALL MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009

6= ★★★★★ MONTANA MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009

8. ★★★★★ MATUA ESTATE PARETAI SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009
9. ★★★★★ VILLA MARIA CELLAR SELECTION SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009
10. ★★★★★ MUD HOUSE MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009

RECOMMENDED BY Cuisine ★★★★★ MAGAZINE

NEW FIVE-STAR STICKER

For most of its 22 years, *Cuisine* has promoted wines awarded four stars and above with a single Recommended by *Cuisine* bottle sticker. The wine market has developed in that time to become more quality-conscious and competitive, with over 640 New Zealand wineries and even more labels for sale. So we are introducing a new gold five-star sticker to help readers distinguish the top *Cuisine* awards, while 4½- and four-star wines will still wear the burgundy Recommended by *Cuisine* sticker.

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NEW ZEALAND SAUVIGNON BLANC

★★★★★

MUD HOUSE SWAN MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $26.90
Elderflower, mung bean, spice, sweat, a touch of ripe tropical fruit... our top Sauvignon elicited a range of flavour descriptors. The panel converged, though, on the question of balance. All the wine's elements play off each other in a delicate, even dance. There is nothing extraneous, just a seamless dose of Marlborough enchantment. "Almost the perfect Sauvignon Blanc," thought Nick Stock. (For our top winemaker profile see page 136)

INNOVATIVE INVIVO

Zambesi fashion house, the Venice Biennale and Auckland's Art+Object gallery have a wine thing in common – and it's called Invivo.

Auckland marketer Tim Lightbourne (pictured right) and winemaker Rob Cameron (left) are old friends who played cricket together at primary school. When, in 2008, they launched Invivo, the pair decided their new label would grow best if partnered with other exciting brands and events where wine was enjoyed.

The result was a highly original and successful marketing strategy.

Zambesi designed the label, Invivo is served at Art+Object events and was the official wine supporter for the New Zealand opening at the 53rd Venice Biennale. It also played a similar role at the 2009 World Music Expo.

Of course, no marketing strategy succeeds without a strong product. Rob Cameron's extensive experience as a flying winemaker in Europe has helped there. "What I was doing there was often remedial," he says. "I was taking average fruit and giving it texture, structure and balance to make a good food wine. I'm applying the same principles here, only to some pretty awesome Marlborough fruit."

5 ★

2 ★★★★★ **INVIVO SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $17-$19** BEST BUY
The intensity of flavour of this wine is matched by an unusual intensity of structure. "I love this slightly more edgy take," said Nick Stock. An exciting flavour spectrum takes in tangelo skin, citrus oil and a range of herbs and spices.

3 ★★★★★ **THE SISTERS SINGLE VINEYARD SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $17-$19.99** BEST BUY
The sizzling, tight Awatere Valley acidity is the first thing you notice. It electrifies the wine and is balanced by layers of tropical fruit flavours in concert with nettle and herbal notes. The perfect partner for a creamy seafood chowder.

4 ★★★★★ **SAINT CLAIR PIONEER BLOCK 3 43 DEGREES SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $22.95-$24.95**
Saint Clair's signature pungency, laced with grassy, sweaty notes, leads the way to a barnstorming palate. Juicy, long acids help the powerful fruit flavours to keep giving... look for an enjoyable passionfruit twist in the tail.

5 ★★★★★ **SAINT CLAIR PIONEER BLOCK 2 SWAMP BLOCK SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $22.95-$24.95**
Winemaker Matt Thomson delivers another zesty, generous broadside of fresh gooseberry, grassiness and citrus. "It has all the bells and whistles," noted Jim Harré.

THE FEICKERT SISTERHOOD

We sometimes talk of a wine being "layered", in reference to its complexity and variety of nuances. In the case of the Feickert family, producer of Blind River and The Sisters brands, the three sisters themselves form a remarkably symmetrical geographical layering.

The eldest of the Feickert sisters, Debbie Sutton, handles marketing duties in Auckland. The youngest, Wendy Jones, lives in Marlborough and helps dad Barry on the family's Awatere Valley vineyards.

The middle sister is – where else? – in the middle. Suzie Feickert lives in Wellington where she manages accounts and logistics.

Mother Dianne also lives in Marlborough and has her own opinion as to why Awatere Valley Sauvignon Blancs often out-perform those from the larger Wairau Valley. "It's more peaceful over here – and the grapes know that."

From left: Suzie Feickert, Wendy Jones and Debbie Sutton

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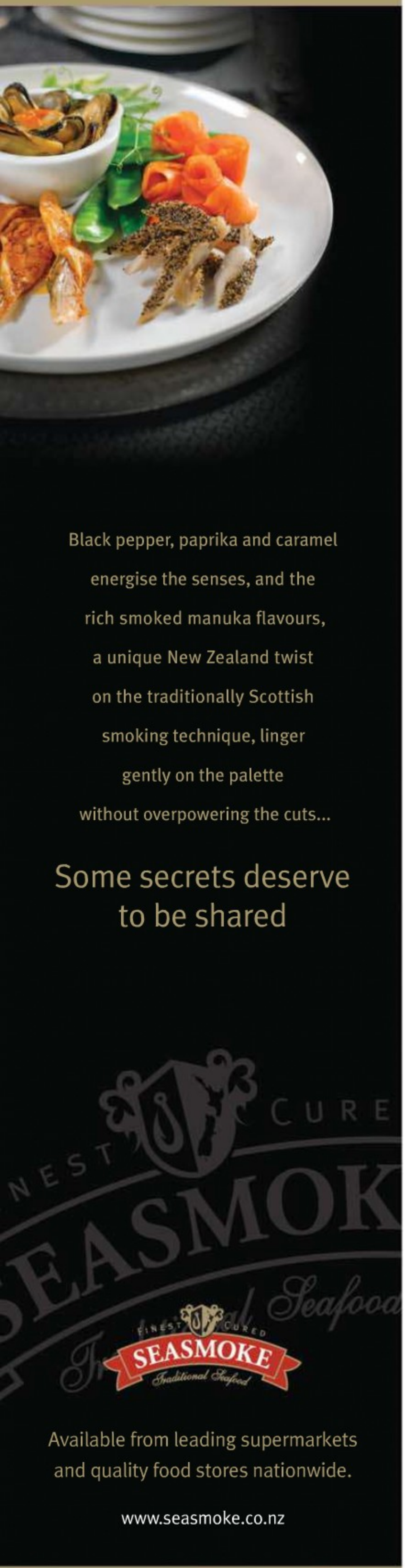

6= ★★★★★ HARWOOD HALL MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $18-$20

A struck-match character adds complexity to this wine and intrigued the panel. Behind it is plenty of tangy fruit intensity. An expressive, sophisticated wine to suit a range of foods, particularly smoked warehou fish pie. [B]

BEST BUY

DIGGING IN FOR THE LONG HARWOOD HALL

Experienced Marlborough winemaker Bill Hennessy was given the nickname Digger by Kim Crawford when they were both at Matua Valley in 1991. The fact Bill was Australian and once had a fondness for utes and cowboy hats may have played a role. Digger's new partner in wine, Corey Hall (pictured), is also a Matua Valley old boy but escaped nickname-free. Digger and Corey launched their new label, Harwood Hall, with the 2008 vintage. "We dabbled last year – this year we're looking to export and bring some sales reps on board," Digger reports. Along with Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, the label will offer a Pinot Gris and Syrah from the same region, along with a Pinot Noir from Central Otago. Production is being built methodically. "We do have some heritage but it's not going to happen overnight," says Digger. "No one has had to give up the day job yet."

6= ★★★★★ MONTANA MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $16.95-$17.95

BEST BUY

Montana's sharply priced, perennially pleasure-giving, entry-level Sauvignon has been a standard bearer for the Marlborough style around the world for two decades now, characterised by poise and precision, rather than power. A wine of finesse to enjoy with a summer salad. [D]

8 ★★★★★ MATUA ESTATE PARETAI SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $28.95-$32.95

A fascinating rendition from the brand that produced the country's first Sauvignon. It is powerful, with crunchy acids, a grainy texture and intense grapefruit and lime flavours. Nick Stock picked it as a keeper, saying he would love it in his cellar. [A]

9 ★★★★★ VILLA MARIA CELLAR SELECTION SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $22.99

Lime and chilli come to the party in this concentrated, flavoursome wine that bursts with spicy exuberance. It's the complete package – there's something for everybody here. Try it with prosciutto-wrapped rock melon.

10 ★★★★★ MUD HOUSE MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $20.90

"It ticks all the boxes. In New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc 101, this would be top of the class," said Nick Stock. A pungent overture gives way to a capsicum- and kaffir-lime-infused palate and a delicate finish. Serve with steamed clams.

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> **THE NEW ZEALAND WINEMAKING COMMUNITY IS LOVED FOR ITS FEARLESSNESS IN TACKLING NEW FRONTIERS. I LIKE THE DIRECTION THE 2009 KIWI SAUVIGNON VINTAGE HAS TAKEN...**
>
> NICK STOCK, MELBOURNE WINE JUDGE

★★★★★ SAINT CLAIR VICAR'S CHOICE SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $16.95-$18.95 BEST BUY

There's an unusual light, luscious, come-hither quality to this Sauvignon Blanc. It also displays more curves than sharp angles. Flinty and herbal, with some sweetness, it has what it takes to become a summer party favourite.

★★★★★ WAIRAU RIVER HOME BLOCK SAUVIGNON BLANC 2007 (Marlborough) $25

"Sauvignon Blanc, but not as we know it," the panel felt. The extraordinary brightness of this older wine offers proof that Sauvignon doesn't have to be a one-year wonder. A complex, toasty, nectarine-flavoured treat.

★★★★★ WITHER HILLS SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $20

The bracing, pristine flow of this wine brings to mind a jewel-bright, fast-moving New Zealand river. The juicy sweetness is balanced by a keen acidic edge. It combines elegance with conviviality... a Sauvignon for all seasons.

★★★★½ COOPERS CREEK RIPARIAN MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $13.95-$19.95 BEST BUY

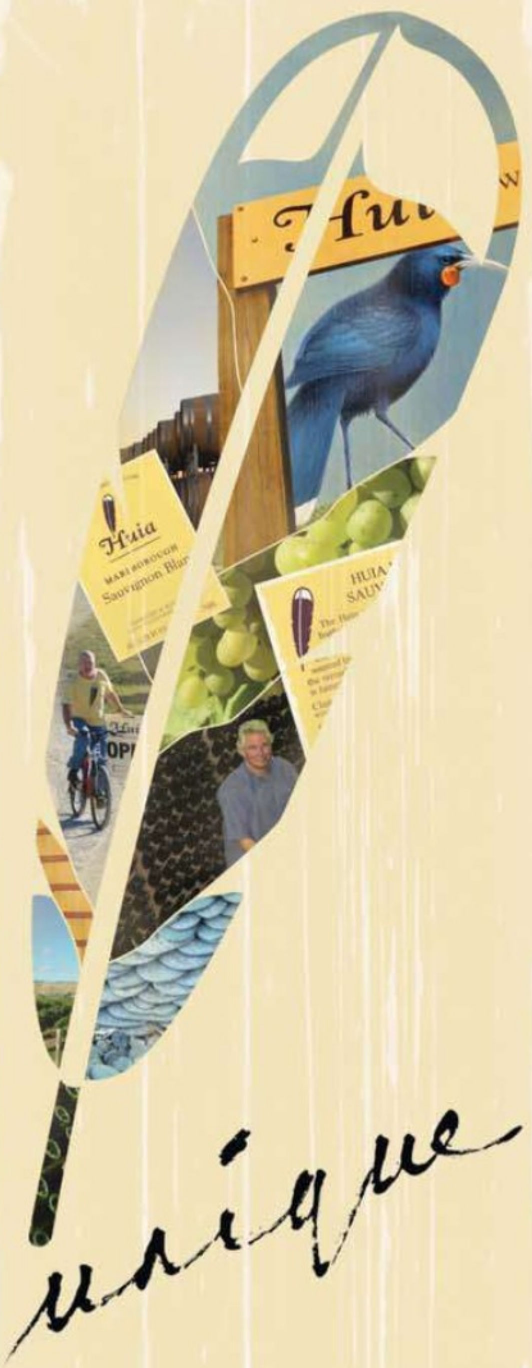
The aromatics start relatively quietly, then you're caught in a raging torrent of punchy, zesty fruit. The ride is wild but the raft doesn't tip; balance is maintained. Thrillseekers... this is for you. [C]

★★★★½ DASHWOOD SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $16-$18

Awatere Valley's perennial over-achiever shows typical love-at-first-sniff appeal. It's a cleansing, zingy amalgam of limey, herbaceous and tropical fruit characters. Very seafood-friendly... a crumbed tarakihi fillet with tartare sauce would do nicely.

★★★★½ FOUR CORNERS MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $12.99-$13.99 BEST BUY

This Rapaura Springs label is new, the wine itself unmistakably Marlborough. Herbaceous, sweaty characters dig in alongside some tropical fruit allies and go the distance. John Belsham admired the "lingering creaminess".



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TOP WINE

Nadine Worley, Mud House winemaker

Nadine Worley remembers drinking more wine during her early career as a nurse than she does now she's a winemaker.

"That seems weird, but I loved wine and nurses do tend to drink a lot," she says.

Much of that nursing career was spent in small outback communities in the Northern Territory. "These places were 90 per cent Aboriginal and the conditions were third world. It was eye-opening." Given that scenario, having a glass or two at the end of a day's work doesn't seem at all weird.

After five years at the sharp end of health care, Worley enrolled for the winemaking degree at Roseworthy in her hometown of Adelaide "on a whim". And so began the winemaking pathway that has led to her current position as winemaker at Mud House Wines.

From vintage one, there were no regrets. Early on, she gravitated naturally towards cooler-climate wine regions. "In Australia I worked in the Adelaide Hills and then western Victoria... those regions had the wine styles I liked making. I couldn't see myself ever making a big, ballsy Barossa Valley Shiraz."

She and a fellow student also gravitated naturally towards each other. During the early years after Roseworthy, Worley and partner Peter Jackson have maintained a relationship while working some vintages apart and some together.

One of the latter was a memorable spell at a small family winery in northern Italy. "It was our first year out of uni and we had no idea what we were in for," she recalls. "We rocked up to this winery and basically ran the show."

Jackson worked the 2005 vintage in Marlborough, loved it and reported back to Worley: "I've found the place we want to be." Worley joined him and took on the assistant winemaking gig at Mud House soon after (Jackson is white winemaker at Whitehaven).

New Zealand's cool climate and nascent wine industry have attracted many Australian winemakers over the years. It's an easy transition to make, says Worley. "Once you get past the jokes about accents and rugby, there's not much difference culturally.

"But in Australia the industry can be more of an old boys' club, especially in the established areas. The wine industry here is more welcoming. I think that's partly because most people have come from somewhere else."

Since arriving, Worley has been happily immersed in the production of Sauvignon Blanc. "I do love it... which is just as well as it's such a big part of my job. What's exciting is the regionality we're seeing... the different palate structures between the regions and the subregions.

"Australia has been losing its regionality; it's very important for New Zealand to maintain the integrity and quality of each region."

The 2009 vintage was Worley's fourth at Mud House and her first in the overseeing winemaking role. She made it a vintage to remember, with two Sauvignons in our Top Ten, including the top wine.

"We had a cool start to the growing season that year, which extended the ripening while retaining the acidity," she says. "The '09 Swan was made from two parcels of estate-grown fruit, which is the way it should be."

Worley grew up in Adelaide. While she knew she was coming to a cool climate, the mild Kiwi summers surprised her. "Peter and I get back to Oz each summer. I do miss those hot days on the beach, beer in hand."

★★★★½ **FRAMINGHAM SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $19.90**
This top Marlborough producer rolls out a fresh herb garden of tastes – fennel and sweet basil among them. The texture is attractively full and fleshy, the finish long and dry. It would serve well as an elegant apéritif, alongside green olives.

★★★★½ **GOLDWATER BY VAVASOUR WAIRAU VALLEY SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $20-$22**
All the attributes of the excellent '09 vintage are on show in this wine, which is dripping with gooseberry and lime flavours. Serve it with mussels in a light chilli and coconut cream sauce.

★★★★½ **HUNTER'S SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $17-$19.50**
The pedigree of this pioneering winery comes through in this delightfully poised rendition. Trilling passionfruit, herbal and blackcurrant notes play above a taut acid bass line. Try it with some chargrilled garlic prawns.

★★★★½ **JACKSON ESTATE GREY GHOST SAUVIGNON BLANC 2008 (Marlborough) $35**
A divisive wine. Nick Stock compared it to a Pouilly-Fumé. Jim Harré was less convinced, though he enjoyed the smoky sulphides. The guava and green-almond notes, and a smoky minerality, help make it a very atypical Marlborough Sauvignon.

★★★★½ **KINGFISHER BAY SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $9.99**

BEST BUY

It isn't easy being green, as this wine discovered. John Belsham wondered if its Granny Smith green characters were too overt; Nick Stock felt it was "a balanced, nicely finished, commercial style". We'll give Kermit the last word: "Green can be cool and friendly like."

★★★★½ **WAIPARA HILLS SOUL OF THE SOUTH MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $20.90**
Prepare for a clearing of your sinuses... the aromatic attack is full-on. The palate is flamboyant and pristine, very ripe with a hint of sweetness and blackcurrant flavours ringing out. If you like your Sauvignon big and brassy, try this.

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nz sauvignon blanc

FOOD MATCHES

Seafood savvy

Seafood and Sauvignon Blanc... now there's a match made in Aotearoa. Add summer and the stage is set. Make the most of the golden weather by trying these great seafood-Sauvignon pairings from this issue:

- Grilled Cloudy Bay Tuatua with Lemon Tarragon Butter (page 74) **The Sisters Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc 2009**
- Skewers of Prawns, Squid & Hapuku with Charred Corn, Tomato & Coriander Salad & Tomato Cumin Dressing (page 64) **Villa Maria Cellar Selection Sauvignon Blanc 2009**
- Orzo Pasta with Seafood, Zucchini, Capers & Olives (page 64) **Dashwood Sauvignon Blanc 2009**
- Rocket & Watercress Soup with Scallop Dumplings (page 56) **Invivo Sauvignon Blanc 2009**
- Panfried Snapper with Anchovies & Peperonata (page 66) **Saint Clair Pioneer Block 2 Swamp Block Sauvignon Blanc 2009**

4★

★★★★ BLIND RIVER SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $24.99-$27.99
Plenty of zesty Awatere acidity etches what John Belsham describes as "lovely fine lines". The fruit is pure, with green, herbal notes making a big splash. Pour some over greenlipped mussels, add garlic and parsley, and you're in business.

★★★★ BOUNDARY VINEYARDS RAPAURA ROAD MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $19.95
"These are the aromas that made Marlborough famous and the palate is seamless – no lumps or bumps," enthused Nick Stock. The pleasantly creamy texture and clean, ripe fruit make this a fine partner for battered oysters. [D]

★★★★ FAIRHALL DOWNS SINGLE VINEYARD MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $18.95-$20.95
Yellow fruit flavours (grapefruit pith, mirabelle plum) and toasty notes are carried through to a lengthy finish. Perfect for a classic Austrian lunch on the deck: wiener schnitzel and potato salad.

★★★★ FALLEN ANGEL SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $23-$30
Waiheke Island winery Stonyridge has been having both fun and success with its Fallen Angel label. This rich, broad, spicy wine brings out the fruit bowl – citrus, nectarine and passionfruit are all on offer.

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nz sauvignon blanc

★★★★ FORREST THE VALLEYS AWATERE SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $19.99-$22.99
This wine provoked lively discussion. It is a sweeter version, which helped hold it back for Nick Stock. The two other judges enjoyed its minerality and felt the sweetness was balanced by the acidity. Match with lightly spiced Thai food.

★★★★ JULES TAYLOR SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $19-$22
There's more poise than noise in this well-executed rendition from the experienced Jules Taylor. Green bean and herbal flavours are presented against a fleshy, generous mouthfeel. "The power evolves and intensifies," noted the judges.

★★★★ MT DIFFICULTY CENTRAL OTAGO SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $24.95
Jim Harré purred appreciatively over the gooseberry and sweet herb notes, and the "finesse on the finish". This is a racy, edgy, green-tinged flash, equipped with high-octane acidity. Have it with a summer sandwich, chocker with pickle and relish.

★★★★ PEREGRINE SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Central Otago) $20-$22
This Peregrine wine captures the intensity of Central Otago's mid-summer rays – vivid green gooseberry and tropical fruit flavours come with a weighty, upright, edgy texture. Salmon steaks with green salsa would do nicely.

★★★★ THE SUNDAY PADDOCK SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $20
Spring meadow (freshly cut grass) aromatics introduce tangy tangelo and melon flavours that grow and prosper in the mouth. The finish is long and juicy. This new label is fast developing a reputation for well-made wines full of verve.

★★★★ THE TERRACE HEIGHTS ESTATE SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $17.95-19.95
Those big capital letters on the label set the tone. This is a large, racy wine. Green bean, gooseberry and tropical fruit notes lead a balanced attack. Terrific with a grilled goat's cheese and walnut salad.

★★★★ VAVASOUR AWATERE VALLEY SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (Marlborough) $20-$22
Stu Marfell and his Awatere Valley team's Sauvignon savoir faire delivers another punchy, precise wine. The zippy acids say "let's move"; the fleshier elements ask "what's the rush?". "Complete," noted Nick Stock.

BEST BUY

★★★★ W5 MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 $12.99
Racy, sweaty scents kick things off. This is a concentrated, generous wine, with lime, spice and capsicum flavours all jostling for pole position. An approachable style and well priced to serve as a holiday staple.

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It is generally considered that New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs are at their best within one or two years of their vintage. However, the more complex styles emerging have the ability to age gracefully for several years.

To source wines listed, contact the distributor (listed by letter).
[A] Foster's NZ, ph: 09-638 2277 **[B]** Hennessy Hall Wine Company, ph: 021-702 474
[C] NZ Wine Society, ph: 0800-809 463 **[D]** Pernod Ricard, ph: 09-336 8300

For complete wine-tasting listings visit **cuisine.co.nz** (three-star results are listed only on the website)

TASTE OUR TOP WINES

Taste our New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs at the following fine-wine stores.

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First Glass Wines & Spirits
Ph: 09-486 6415
first-glass.co.nz
Wed 13 Jan 7pm
$15 No reservations

Glengarry Victoria Park
Ph: 0800-733 505
glengarry.co.nz
Sat 19 Dec
12pm-4pm (free)

HAMILTON
Hamilton Wine Company
Ph: 07-839 1190
Feb 2010, please call to confirm date

HAVELOCK NORTH
Advintage
Ph: 06-877 9754
advintage.co.nz
Fri 18 Dec
10am-5pm (free)

WELLINGTON
Glengarry Thorndon Quay
Ph: 04-472 7051
glengarry.co.nz
Sat 19 Dec
12pm-4pm (free)

CHRISTCHURCH
Vino Fino
Ph: 03-365 5134
vinofino.co.nz
Tues 26 Jan 6pm

Cuisine WINE TASTING

★★★★★
Outstanding quality

★★★★☆
Excellent quality

★★★★
Very good quality

★★★
Good quality (website listings only)

Drink now, don't cellar

Drink now or cellar for up to two years from now

Not ready for drinking yet

RECOMMENDED BY Cuisine ★★★★★ MAGAZINE

RECOMMENDED BY Cuisine MAGAZINE

Tasting Method All wines are tasted blind. If, after discussion, the tasters do not agree on a star rating, the wine will receive the rating given by the majority but dissenting comments will be included in the wine notes. The scores of winemaker judges cannot exceed those of other judges.

Availability All wines entered in *Cuisine* tastings must be readily available at the time of publication. However, high demand and a six-week lead time between tastings and publication can affect availability. If you cannot find the wines, contact the winery or distributor direct.

Prices Suppliers are asked to provide a retail price range for all wines entered in tastings. Prices do vary between vineyard and low-to-high volume outlets and cannot, therefore, be guaranteed. All prices are quoted in $NZ

Recommended by *Cuisine* stickers Look for these top wines as your guarantee of quality.

Gold sticker Wines awarded five stars can wear the gold five-star Recommended by *Cuisine* sticker

Burgundy sticker Wines awarded 4 1/2 and four stars can display the familiar burgundy Recommended by *Cuisine* sticker.

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rosé TO THE OCCASION

ROSÉ AND JOHN SAKER HAVE BEEN THROUGH A LOT TOGETHER. WHILE AT TIMES THEY HAVEN'T SEEN EYE TO OEIL, HE HAS DISCOVERED PINK CAN BE PURE PLEASURE

"We had this Portuguese wine last night," proclaimed my mother proudly, showing me the empty bottle she'd brought home from the restaurant. It was dark and club-shaped, with a dreamy illustrated label coloured in Desert Road shades. My head swam. *This* was European wine culture.

I was an unworldly teenager given to fits of romantic reverie, but I was not alone in being ensnared by Mateus Rosé.

At its popular height in the early 1970s, 3.25 million cases a year of the familiar, round bottle were sold around the world. In wine-innocent countries such as ours, the light, medium-sweet, slightly fizzy Mateus was often not only an introduction to rosé, but to wine itself.

Then I discovered Aussie reds at university and began to question rosé's credentials. Neither red nor white, it seemed a wine for people who didn't like wine. A few years' study in the US only confirmed this view. At formal college dinners, California rosé was downed like Coca-Cola, to which it owed a stylistic debt.

Everything changed in the northern hemisphere summer of 1977. It was a summer in Provence.

She (who later became my wife) and I hitchhiked and slept *à la belle étoile*. Too poor to have more than the occasional, inexpensive restaurant meal, we often cast envious glances at the diners on restaurant terraces. What were they all drinking?

Rosé. In the Old Port at Marseilles, under the plane trees in the old Roman towns of Arles and Orange, and at the beachside bistros in Le Lavandou and Fréjus, chilled, onionskin-coloured rosé was the wine of choice.

And what a joy that dry, steely wine was. It refreshed, quenched and matched a wide range of foods, from salade Niçoise to steak frites.

For the next few years I stayed in France and rosé was always close by. And it was not seen as a summer-only libation. When I was playing for a basketball club during a dark, snowbound winter in the Vosges, my team-mates often opted for rosé to have with an *assiette de charcuterie* late in the evening after practices. Again, French rosé's light, bracing qualities made it ideal for such an occasion.

Returning to New Zealand was a return to rosé wilderness, a place where rosé was seldom taken seriously and mostly misunderstood, despite the remarkable progress elsewhere in the wine industry.

More rosé is now made in New Zealand – partly in response to the growing popularity of the dry, enticing Provençal-type rosés in trendsetting New York and London.

However, quality is still an issue here. In this latest rosé tasting, only four out of 60 wines were awarded four stars.

Days of sun and rosés

Rosé's attractive "blush" colour, together with its lightness and sheer drinkability, make it a great sunshine wine. Lunches, picnics and late-afternoon get-togethers are all ideal rosé occasions. Drink it with a simple table of olives, pesto, dips and cheeses – rosé really comes into its own alongside the flavours of the Mediterranean.

TASTING PANEL

The Sauvignon Blanc judging panel reconvened for our New Zealand rosé tasting. Joining regular panel chair John Belsham was Australian writer and judge Nick Stock and experienced international judge Jim Harré. Jane Boyle from New Zealand Wine Cellars was associate judge.

Find more magazines at www.magazinesdownload.com

★★★★ CLEARVIEW ESTATE BLACK REEF BLUSH 2009 (Hawke's Bay) $15-$19
Dark fuchsia in colour, this fresh, vibrant wine is reminiscent of violets and strawberries, with leafy hints. A rosé to enjoy alfresco with friends and a flavoursome chicken and seafood paella.

★★★★ COOPERS CREEK HUAPAI ROSÉ 2009 (Auckland) $15-$18
This crisp, delicate wine is a gorgeous shade of bright watermelon, with a tide of florals and sweet cherry notes balancing the herbal underlay. Definitely one to kick back with... a bottle may not be enough.

HOW TO MAKE ROSÉ

First, here's how rosé is not made – by mixing red and white wine together. While it may happen in some places (including New Zealand), in Europe it is prohibited, except for rosé champagnes.

The traditional method of making still rosé, used by most producers in Provence, is a delicate process in which the skins of the pressed red grapes are removed after just a few hours in contact with the juice. The skins are the source of a red wine's colour and tannins, hence the delicate pink shades and reduced tannins of many rosés.

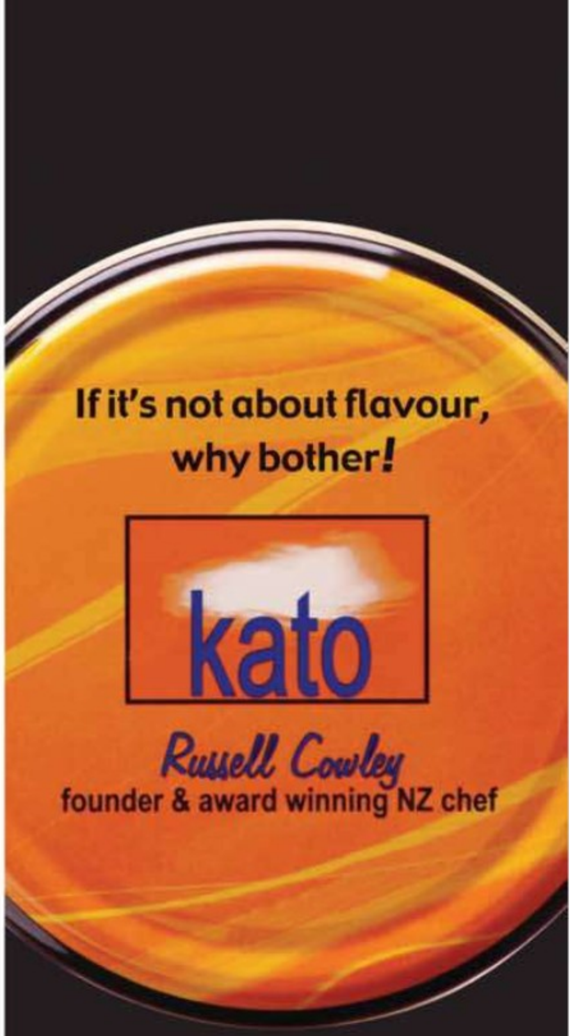
Another pathway to pink is saignée. To give a red wine more colour and concentration, sometimes some of the juice is drained off at an early stage of the ferment. The remaining juice gains more skin contact, which gives it more oomph. The bled juice (saignée means "bled") can be fermented separately to make rosé. Many New Zealand rosés are made this way.

a tuppenny tipple

Rosé has come over all philatelic in the Waitaki Valley. New player Kurow Estate's pair of 2009 rosés carry the names Penny Blonde and Penny Pink, and each label is illustrated with a venerable old stamp. But that's not Queen Victoria's stern visage – it's winery owner Antonio Pasquale.

★★★★ JULES TAYLOR GISBORNE ROSÉ 2009 $19-$22
The first rosé under her own label by Marlborough girl Jules Taylor is a sure summer hit – a fragrant, sweet, red berryfruit and cherry cocktail. "Beautiful florals and density," said the judges. "Close your eyes and you're drinking white wine."

★★★★ TARRAS VINEYARDS PINOT NOIR ROSÉ 2009 (Central Otago) $19
A worthy sequel to the strong showing by Tarras in our Pinot Noir tasting, this was praised by the entire panel for its elegance. Faint wisps of raspberry triggered thoughts of a blanket in the sun, the sea breaking nearby, green olives, two glasses... ●



I'M SORRY
that the fresh ginger fibers in my sauces get caught in your teeth because I don't use imported powder

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Hot New Look
this Summer

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Edited by Susan Buchanan

LAKE COMO PAGE 144

STAR-SPOTTERS MAY PREFER TO CLIMB THE HILL TO IL GATTO NERO RESTAURANT, OR SETTLE IN FOR A DRINK AT HARRY'S BAR

AARON McLEAN

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LAGO *di* COMO

LAURAINE JACOBS
DIPS HER TOES INTO THE MAGIC AND GLAMOUR OF LAKE COMO, FOR CENTURIES THE TREASURED RETREAT OF THE WORLD'S GLITTERATI

Clockwise from above left: Gardens at Villa d'Este; Villa Erba at Cernobbio; Villa d'Este; the Queen's Pavilion built in honour of Caroline of Brunswick, Queen of England, and now part of Villa d'Este

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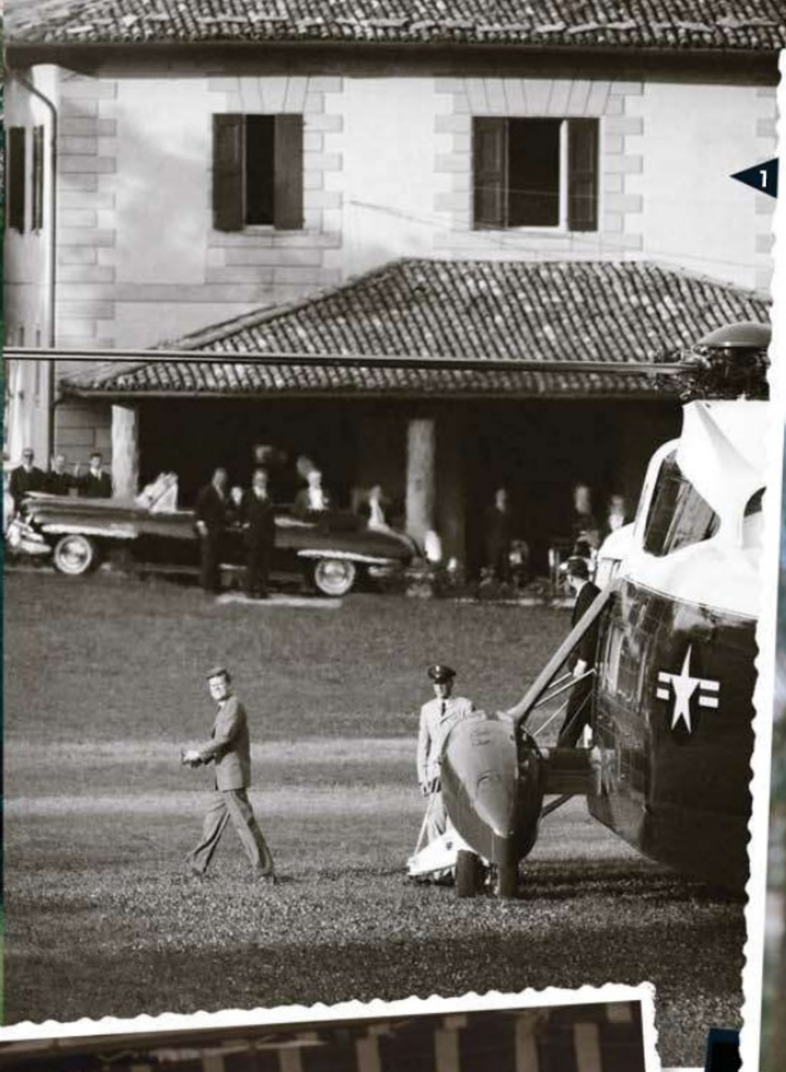

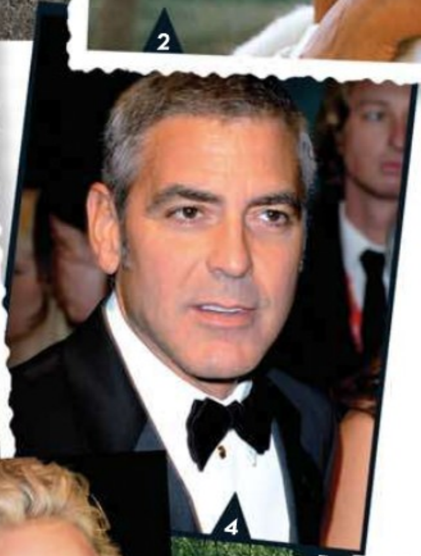

1 US President John F Kennedy walks from the helicopter that brought him to the Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni, in June 1963 **2** Sophia Loren and **3** Vanessa Redgrave, circa 1965 **4** Como resident George Clooney **5** Clooney's lakeside residence **6** Uma Thurman **7** Liam Neeson

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON McLEAN
Historical and celebrity photographs from AP Photo, Corbis, Getty Images and More Images

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Golden leaves drift across the deserted piazzas. A thick, silvery mist clouds the lake. Cafés and hotels are shuttering up for winter. And George Clooney is gone. I have arrived at Lake Como at the end of the season. This is my first visit to this magical corner of northern Italy, but I feel as if I've seen the lake before.

I probably have – on the movie screen. As far back as 1925, Alfred Hitchcock set part of his first film, *The Pleasure Garden*, in the manicured grounds of the luxurious Villa d'Este. This century, James Bond and Anakin Skywalker have both performed here, along with the likes of Uma Thurman, Vanessa Redgrave, Liam Neeson and Antonio Banderas.

The stars also come here to play. The lake has been affectionately known as Lake Clooney since the former *ER* heart-throb moved into the Villa Oleandra, taking over from the Heinz family. Other grand villas here are home to names just as famous. Yet now, with the stars mostly gone and hotel rates cut by up to half, is still a great time to visit. This lake's beauty knows no season, and Hitchcock's locale, Villa d'Este, set on the lakefront in the tiny village of Cernobbio, is possibly the world's most desirable hotel.

For more than 135 years this former Italian royal residence has offered grandeur, service and respectful courtesy to the patrons of its sumptuous suites. As we arrived at dusk, with the light glowing from its windows, it seemed almost enchanted.

Lake Como HAS BEEN AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS LAKE CLOONEY SINCE GEORGE

We are welcomed by Giovanna Salvadore, known to all as Jean, who has worked at Villa d'Este for 43 years, after 20 years at Trans World Airlines with Howard Hughes. She has dealt with all the rich, famous and fashionable, and, now in her eighties, still travels the world promoting the hotel. Funny, shrewd and entertaining, she makes every guest feel at home.

On our way to the restaurant (ties, gentlemen, please), we are surrounded by a sea of children, the overflow from a wedding party. "We don't do weddings like this in the high season," Jean informs us (Katie Holmes' and Tom Cruise's request for an August wedding was politely declined). The next morning is about cooking and I join executive chef Luciano Parolari in the hotel kitchen. One of his famous fresh porcini risottos and a tomato pasta are now part of my repertoire.

To the south is Cernobbio village, where Davide Lacchini's excellent Cenobio restaurant dinner menu showcases regional specialities at the Hotel Regina Olga. Our menu included fresh lake fish in an agrodolce white wine sauce, bresaola of mountain venison, and a rich Parmigiano risotto topped with golden perch, again straight from the lake.

Star-spotters may prefer to climb the hill to Il Gatto Nero restaurant, or settle in for a drink at Harry's Bar.

1

2

3

4

1 Antonio Banderas **2** Robert Mitchum and wife Dorothy at Villa d'Este in June 1988 **3** Writer Gore Vidal **4** Dress check by head waiter in days gone by **5** Aperitivo Et Al, Bellagio **6** Cathedral of Como (Duomo) **7** Freshly marinated fish at Ristorante Silvio **8** End-of-season view of Lake Como from Bellagio

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5

6

CLOONEY MOVED INTO THE VILLA OLEANDRA, TAKING OVER FROM THE HEINZ FAMILY

7

8

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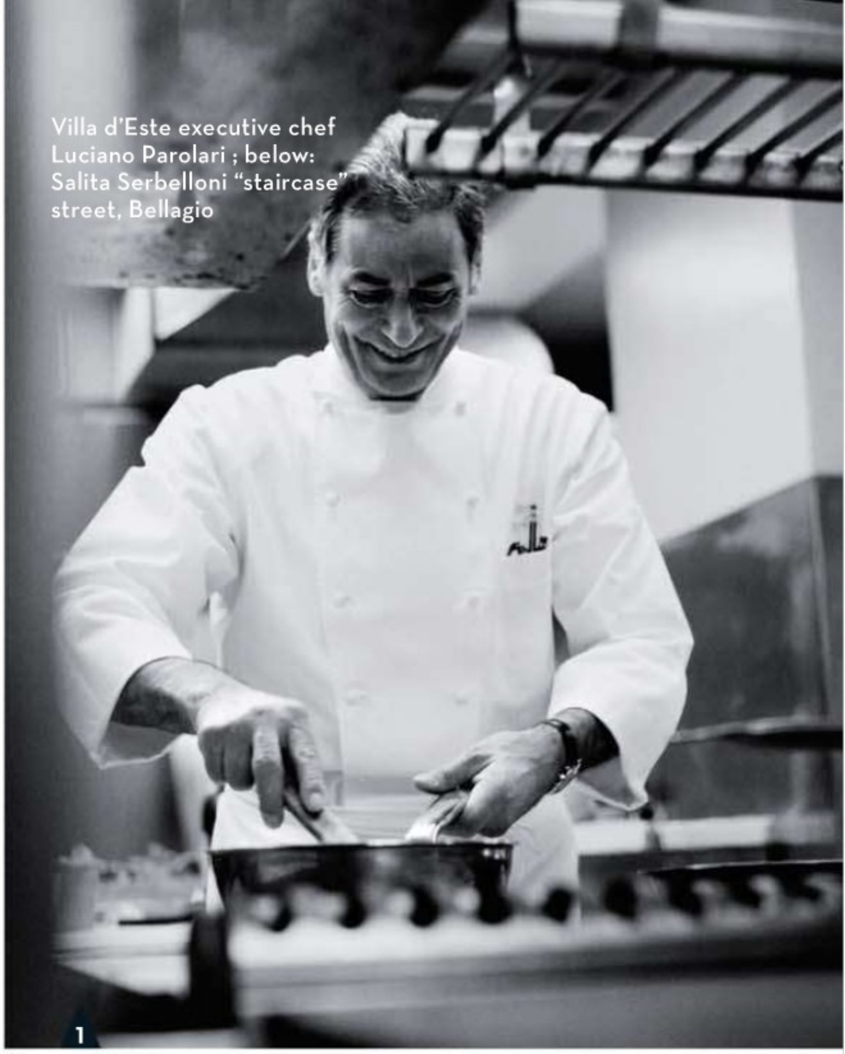
Lake Como's many classy villas and small towns are joined by a twisting road that mostly clings to the edge of the lake, occasionally climbing into the steep hills. You can also travel the lake, which is shaped like an inverted "Y", by boat. Villa d'Este is about halfway up the south-west arm and the business centre of Como, with its narrow streets, upmarket boutiques, bars and restaurants, is a short boat ride away at the end of that arm.

We loved the historical architecture and also discovered end-of-season bargains (don't miss the silk outlet store La Tessitura, and take a trip on the funicular high above the town). We later ate at the Breeze Inn, where chef-owner Luciano Tomasulo's deliciously inventive menu began with a playful take on antipasto that included freshly made sushi (in Italy!), octopus salad with farro, and fried mozzarella balls. The lardo, with a special pepper jelly to cut through the 100 per cent cured fat, was superb and I can still taste his prawn lasagne bathed in a creamy porcini sauce.

A short drive or boat trip north of Villa d'Este, the exquisite Villa Carlotta has rooms filled with Napoleonic art riches, including important marble statues by Antonio Canova. We wandered through the extensive gardens, beautiful in the autumn mist: vegetable plots, citrus groves, romantic English-style gardens and a collection of exotic plants sourced from Australasia.

Not far away at Vanini Osvaldo, locals were arriving with their olive crops to be pressed and bottled for olive



Villa d'Este executive chef Luciano Parolari ; below: Salita Serbelloni "staircase" street, Bellagio

1

The lakeside VILLA D'ESTE IS POSSIBLY THE WORLD'S MOST DESIRABLE HOTEL

oil. Then it was up to Italy's most northern winery, where, high above the water, we sampled the Sorsasso wines of Daniele Travi, a former metallurgist who returned from the US to make wine on an estate that has been in his family since 1777.

At the meeting of the lake's three arms is its gem, the historic town of Bellagio, which cascades steeply to the water's edge. Filled with cobbled steps and traffic-free precincts, it's a romantic place with proud connections to music and flowers. Franz Liszt lived here briefly, walking often in the exquisitely laid-out gardens of Villa Melzi. Giuseppe Verdi was so inspired here, he composed *La Traviata*. In summer flowers bloom everywhere, but for us, the spectacular autumn hues had a beauty of their own.

Another famous five-star haunt is the luxurious Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni on the edge of town, with its charming reception areas. Families book at least two years ahead for a week or two here; some have been doing so for 35 years. An imposing pool dominates the gardens, with panoramic lake views.

The real find in Bellagio was Ristorante Silvio, owned by chef-fisherman Cristian Ponzini, who loves to take visitors out on the lake at night to bring in the daily catch. Some 28 species inhabit the lake so the freshest of fish is always served in the restaurant.

This may have been the finest fish feast of my life, beginning with antipasto of eight different renditions

2

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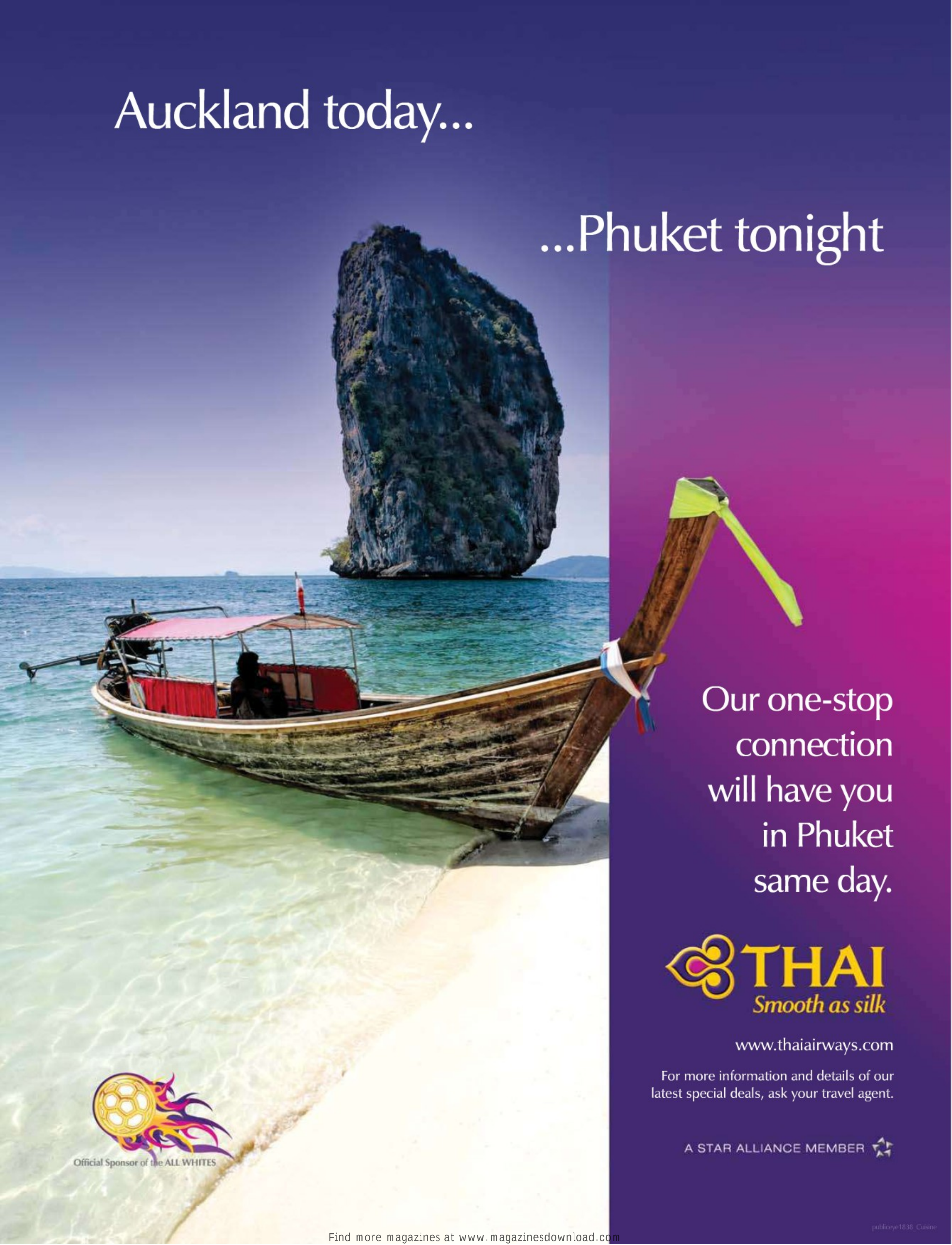

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Below: Villas overlooking Lake Como; inset: Daniele Travi of Sorsasso winery; Ristorante Silvio

of pike, perch, lavarello and sardines, all exquisitely garnished. Course after course of Ponzini's sublime dishes followed.

There's always something special about a chef who takes care to serve local wine. We drank Sorsasso Bianco Lotto, which for us was like meeting an old friend, even though it was only a day since we'd visited the vineyard.

It takes a day or two to explore the labyrinth of Bellagio's passageways, streets and staircases. Boutiques, gelaterie, delicatessens and little eateries are everywhere, and bars and cafés line the lakefront. At Bar Sport, we tried mataloc (the ancient local fruit and nut cake that preceded panettone), with a little liqueur coffee to warm us in the rain. Nearby, former Milano banker Maurizio Salvaderi served us an excellent meal in his very traditional trattoria, Alle Darsene di Loppia.

For a final meal, we became true tourists, taking the boat to the beautiful Locanda dell'Isola Comacina restaurant, where the same menu has been served daily since 1947. Benvenuto Puricelli hasn't changed a thing since buying the island restaurant in 1976. Presidents, kings and film stars have all enjoyed the same gargantuan feast. It's a little like everything else at Lake Como – very traditional, very indulgent, very desirable.

I'm going back in the spring. •

fact file

STAY AT

Albergo Silvio
Via Carcano 12, Bellagio, ph: 31-950 322, bellagiosilvio.com

Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni
Via Roma 1, Bellagio, ph: 31-950 216, villaserbelloni.com
In the hotel's signature restaurant, Mistral, talented chef Ettore Bocchia pursues a menu based on molecular gastronomy.

Hotel du Lac
Piazza Mazzini 32, Bellagio, ph: 31-950 320, bellagiohoteldulac.com

Villa d'Este
Via Regina 40, Cernobbio ph: 31-34 81, villadeste.it

EAT AT

Alle Darsene di Loppia
Via Al Porto 1, Bellagio, ph: 31-445 1102, alledarsenediloppia.com

Breeze Inn Ristorante
Via Natta 29, Como, ph: 31-242 320, breeze-inn.com

Caffè Bar Sport
Piazza della Chiesa 7, Bellagio, ph: 31-950 161

Cenobio
Hotel Regina Olga, Via Regina 18, Cernobbio, ph: 31-510 171, hotelreginaolga.it

Il Gatto Nero
Via Monte Santo 69, Cernobbio, ph: 31-512 042, il-gatto-nero.it

La Locanda dell'Isola Comacina
Comacina, ph: 344-55 083, comacina.it

Ristorante Silvio
See Albergo Silvio listing under "Stay at".

TO VISIT

Harry's Bar
1 Piazza Risorgimento, Cernobbio, ph: 31-334 7057

La Tessitura
Viale Roosevelt 2A, Como, ph: 31-321 666, latessitura.com
An outlet store for Italy's largest silk producer – premium labels at factory prices.

Sorsasso
Via Gaggio 1, Domaso, ph: 344-83 380, sorsasso.it

Vanini Osvaldo
Via Silvio Pellico 10, Lenno, ph: 344-55 127, oliovanini.it

Villa Carlotta
Via Regina 2, Tremezzo, ph: 344-40 405, villacarlotta.it

■ Lauraine Jacobs and Aaron McLean flew to Como at the invitation of the Italian Government Tourist Office in Sydney. Our thanks for the assistance offered by the Como and Bellagio tourist offices.

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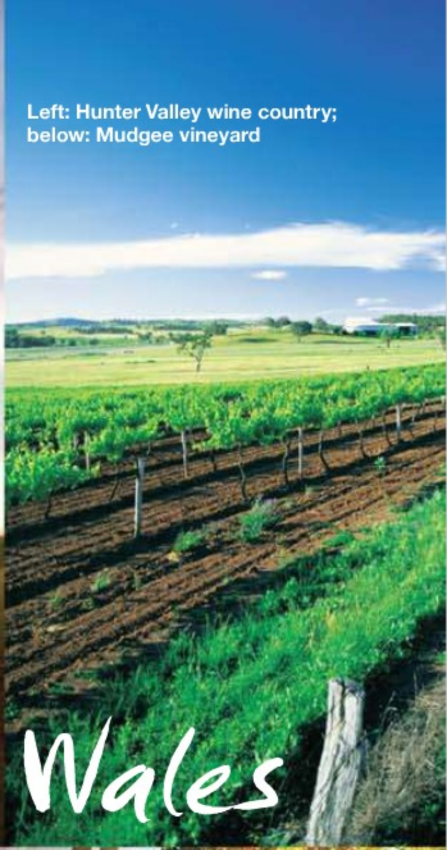

Left: Hunter Valley wine country; below: Mudgee vineyard

Experience New South Wales

Left: Mudgee wine cellar; right: lunch at Hunter Valley vineyard

Mudgee barrel room; right: Moulder Park, Orange

A driving holiday through rural New South Wales is a great way to get off the beaten track and experience true local flavours. You'll be surrounded by breathtaking landscapes, a host of historic country towns and thriving food and wine cultures. There has never been a better time to explore New South Wales.

Visit www.sydney.com for more information

The Hunter Valley

One of Australia's premier holiday destinations, this vibrant region is just a couple of hours' drive north of Sydney. The historic "Valley" is home to more than 120 wineries, a buzzing restaurant scene, boutique food producers and much more.

Things to do

- Visit one of the "blueblood" cellar doors, such as McGuigan, Tyrrell's, Tulloch and Drayton – their families have been making wine here for generations.
- Explore the galleries, antique shops and specialty stores in Morpeth.
- Take a winery tour by bike, bus, limousine or horse-drawn carriage.
- Pamper yourself at a day spa.
- Tee off from one of the region's three championship golf courses.
- Take gourmet cooking lessons or a food- and wine-matching course.
- Visit Hunter Valley Gardens, home to 12 themed gardens each covering more than 25 hectares.
- Watch olive oil being processed then taste it on the Hunter Valley Olive Trail.
- Learn from cheese- and wine-matching sessions at Binnorie Dairy and the Hunter Valley Cheese Factory.

Events

- April: Hunter Valley Steamfest, Maitland
- April: Hunter Valley Sémillon and Seafood festival
- May: Lovedale Long Lunch, at seven participating wineries
- May: Upper Hunter Wine and Food Affair
- September: Feast of the Olive, Pokolbin district
- October: Jazz in the Vines, Tyrrell's Vineyard
- October: Opera in the Vines

www.huntertourism.com

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Mt Canobolas, Orange

Café society, Orange

Mudgee winemaker at work

The Heart of NSW – Orange & Mudgee

Just under four hours from Sydney, these enticing Central Ranges townships in the heart of wine country are not to be missed.

Orange

Orange is a gourmand's delight with an excellent monthly farmers' market and fantastic restaurants including Selkirks and Lolli Redini, plus Tonic at nearby Millthorpe. An active art scene and a top-notch theatre are other drawcards.

Things to do

- Explore the self-guided Orange Heritage Trail.
- Fossick and pan for gold at historic Ophir (pans can be hired at the Visitor Information Centre).
- Take one of the Mt Canobolas walking tracks; this ancient volcano is the highest point between the Blue Mountains and Perth.
- Walk through the Sensory and Biblical Gardens at Orange Botanical Gardens.
- Take a vignerons' tour around the 20-plus cellar doors open to the public.

Events

- April: F.O.O.D Week (Food of Orange District) showcases local wine, food, arts and culture
- October: Orange Wine Week is a week-long celebration of food, wine and music
- October: Australian National Field Days

www.orange-nsw.com

Mudgee

Mudgee has everything: food, wine, the great outdoors and sophisticated accommodation. Sample local produce at the many cafés and restaurants in town, or buy direct at the farm gate or gourmet food shops. Mudgee is also home to some 50 wineries.

Things to do

- Taste wonderful local honeys, olives, hazelnuts and venison prosciutto, and more on the Mudgee Taste Trail and Mudgee Gourmet Trail.
- Head for the restaurant in the beautifully restored Mudgee railway station.
- Visit some of those wineries.

Events

- July: Mudgee Small Farm Field Days
- September: Mudgee Wine Festival and Mudgee Wine Show

www.visitmudgeeregion.com.au

Wine tasting in Orange

Southern Highlands

The gentle green hills of the Southern Highlands are just 90 minutes' drive from Sydney. Here, the cool climate and rich soils produce both excellent wines and beautiful, formal gardens. Good food is on offer throughout at country inns and restaurants, farmers' markets and produce shops. Enjoy genuine country hospitality from cosy B&Bs to grand country manors.

Things to do

- The Southern Highlands Food and Wine Trail covers everything from cellar doors to farmers' markets.
- Go bushwalking in Morton National Park and see the Fitzroy Falls.
- Discover the Georgian colonial town of Berrima and have a Guinness there at the Surveyor General Inn, Australia's oldest continually licensed inn.
- Browse the antique shops.
- Enjoy a European-style spa at Bowral's grand Milton Park Estate.
- Visit the Bradman Museum of Cricket in Bowral.
- Visit the extensive gallery at the Sturt Craft Centre in Mittagong.

Events

- April: Bundanoon is Brigadoon, Bundanoon
- June: Cool Flavours of the Southern Highlands
- September/October: Bowral Tulip Time, Bowral
- November: Vaude Highland Fling, Bundanoon, mountain-biking on forest tracks
- December: Annual Southern Highlands Christmas Fair at Southern Highland Wines

www.southern-highlands.com.au

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NEW ZEALAND'S OLIVE OIL INDUSTRY HAS HAD ITS SHARE OF MISSTEPS. DAVID BURTON UNCOVERS INSPIRATION AND DESPERATION IN AN INDUSTRY FIGHTING TO SECURE A FUTURE

At Moore Wilson Fresh in Wellington, no fewer than 30 New Zealand olive oils vie for the buyer's attention and that is only a cross-section of the 100-plus domestic brands now on the market.

As you look along the shelves, two thoughts spring to mind. First, you've never heard of most of these producers. Second, virtually all these extra virgin oils are sold in what appear to be oversized perfume bottles. This is appropriate, since they are also priced a bit like perfume.

No doubt packaging the oil in tall, spindly 250ml bottles is intended to soften the price shock, but at $45 to $60 a litre, New Zealand oil can cost three to four times that of a one-litre bottle of Spanish extra virgin. Ten years ago our prices were even sillier, with $70 a litre not uncommon.

Yet the table oil of the country's biggest producer, The Village Press in Hawke's Bay, now sells at $19.95 a litre. It can thank economies of scale for that: it has 30,000 trees in its two groves and a big press around the back of Sileni Estates returning 150,000 litres of oil this year. But even so, co-owner Maureen Startup says its pricing is also about accepting lower returns to get New Zealanders using domestic extra virgin olive oil.

It's not that the rest of the olive industry is trying to rip us off; just that there's not much money in olives. After you've paid for picking, pressing and bottling, the care of the trees and the general maintenance of your estate, there might not be any profit at all.

I can easily see why, having one cold winter's day in Marlborough joined the olive harvest and attacked my first tree with a mechanical rake.

Until then, I'd imagined that olives grew in convenient bunches, like grapes. But no, they scatter themselves among the foliage here and there, in irritating twos and threes. Having, after 20 minutes of solid flailing, finally made my way around the tree, I looked ruefully at the net I'd laid on the ground and realised I had only harvested seven or eight kilos.

A quick calculation – based on an olive price of 50 cents to a dollar per kilo – suggested a full hectare of 400 trees would net just $6000, as against $15,000 to $25,000 for the same area in grapes. And olive oil lacks the export potential of wine, and we certainly don't consume it at the same rate.

Like grapes, olives thrive in free-draining soils and a sunny climate, and thus our great olive regions and our best wine regions are one and the same: Waiheke Island, Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa, Marlborough, Nelson, Canterbury and a few microclimates in Otago. So it's a shame, but probably no surprise, that in Marlborough, for instance, the majority of olive groves have now been converted into vineyards.

Outside the wine regions, Kapiti is the only shining exception to the otherwise immutable rule that the entire west coasts of both islands are too windy and too wet for olives. Not that that stopped people planting in places like windswept Golden Bay, where failed growers can now point to their near-horizontal trees as proof they were right all along - the Earth *is* flat.

And, having planted their olives, one wonders how seriously the original 400-odd members of Olives New Zealand thought about the hard peasant-like yakka needed to harvest them.

Those who had established groves as retirement projects (which, as Margaret Edwards of the Waiheke Olive Oil Company points out, accounts for about 80 per cent of the industry) no doubt called in their doctor, lawyer, accountant and dentist friends to help with the first few harvests. A jolly old weekend would have been had by all, bringing in the crop while reminiscing over lunch about their OE years in London, when they'd pack their tent into their Mini each summer and head off to the south of France or Italy to fall in love among the olive groves with the books of Elizabeth David.

David's honeyed praise of all things Mediterranean (later compounded by Peter Mayle and Frances Mayes) has encouraged many an urban professional facing a midlife crisis to fancy they might find happiness and fulfilment by becoming a Tuscan peasant.

Top table olives

Kalamata is jet black, pointy and has a firm meaty flesh that comes away easily from the stone. Sadly, this famous Greek variety is rare in New Zealand, because cuttings are banned from export. The huge uovo di piccione ("pigeon egg") is a famous Italian olive that is seemingly loved by everyone, but also rarely grown in New Zealand. Manzanillo, the Spanish table olive, is grown here (see top ten oils).

KIERAN SCOTT / CANVASS

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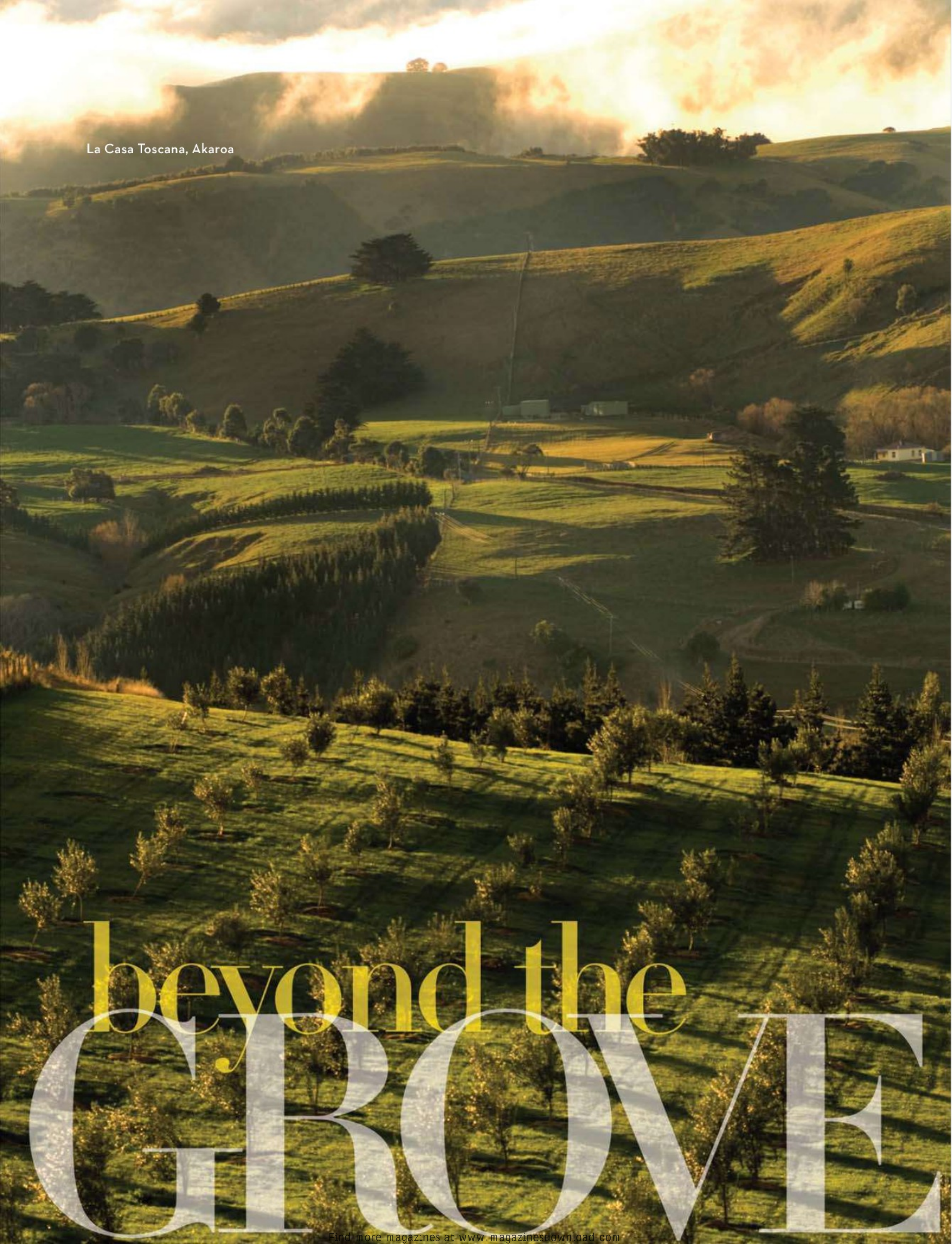

La Casa Toscana, Akaroa

beyond the GROVE

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It didn't take long, though, for the gloss of the weekend harvest parties to wear off. Meanwhile, the crop had become too big to hand-pick.

Luckily for the mom and pop investor, nowadays they can call in a contractor who showers the olives to the ground with his trunk-shaking machine. However, not every grower is convinced about the shaker.

Quality-conscious Graeme Harris of Kapiti Olives and Nalini Baruch of Lot Eight in Martinborough shun the machine. Baruch is concerned at the damage the shaker does to the bark, while Harris reckons hiring pickers works out much the same, so he brings in workers after they've picked the district's grape harvest, providing continuity of employment.

At the top end of the New Zealand industry, the handful of really big players, such as The Village Press, are putting a lot of effort into the right way to process and market their olives.

John Arthur of Matapiro – with 17,000 trees planted along two rocky, well-drained river terraces in Hawke's Bay – is going the blended-oil route. The idea is to obtain the best compromise between good flavour and high yield.

Some olives he harvests early, when the oil content is low, but the olives are full of peppery, pungent, bitter polyphenols and volatiles. This tasty oil is blended with oil harvested later in the season, when the olives have lost many of their polyphenols, but yield a much higher ratio of oil.

Top ten New Zealand oil varieties

1 Frantoio
Our most widely planted variety grows well all over the country and produces superb, world-class oil. In Italy, where it is a major component of Tuscan blends, frantoio is the benchmark for excellence.

2 Koroneiki
This olive is grown mainly in the North Island, with small quantities in Nelson and Marlborough. Despite coming from the baking heat of Greece, koroneiki can survive rain and howling winds. I've seen this tree windswept almost to the horizontal, yet still alive. Those who like delicate oils will love koroneiki, which brings lovely floral notes to a blend as well as being able to stand on its own.

3 Leccino
The second most widely grown olive in New Zealand is a great blending oil, especially with frantoio, as it is milder and nuttier. The frost-hardy Minerva clone is widely planted in cooler areas.

4 Picual
This popular resident of southern Spain grows well in dryer regions, but is prone to fungal diseases in the north. The distinctively flavoured oil has hints of tomato leaves and stalks, green herbs and citrus. When overripe it has a pungent cat's-pee character similar to Sauvignon Blanc.

5 Manzanillo
This Spanish variety likes our dry regions – Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa and Canterbury. Being mainly a table olive, it has a lower oil content than many varieties, but the oil can have attractive buttery and tropical fruit flavours.

6 Pendolino
This Italian cultivar has elegant pendulous branches – hence the name. Primarily grown as a pollinator, mostly in Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa and Kapiti, pendolino produces a mild oil, less pungently herbal than some, but not as nutty as leccino. Pendolino is mainly a blending oil.

7 J5
Northland growers are fond of J5, a heritage variety that has adapted to the region's humid climate. It is descended, they say, from the original olive trees planted in New Zealand by Governor George Grey or Logan Campbell. In the 1920s, Marino Lunjevich grew J5 at Whangape. Cuttings were taken from one of his trees in the 1970s and propagated by nurseryman Milton Johnson (hence J5). The variety is famous for the peppery flavour of its oil.

8 Verdale
This French olive made it to New Zealand via a sojourn in South Australia. The oil is famously peppery and grassy, and very well regarded. Pressings from street trees in the Wellington suburb of Mount Victoria are bottled annually by Wellington City Council and in 2005 the oil won two gold medals at the Los Angeles County Fair.

9 Moraiolo
This Tuscan cultivar is a relatively recent arrival, but Branka Simunovich reports early success with it at Simunovich Olive Estate. The oil is delicate and floral, but peppery when picked early.

10 Chemlali
This Algerian variety is known for the light, creamy, almondy character of its oil, although it can also be quite fruity. Makers of memorial wreaths love chemlali because of the straightness of its branches.

A fine pickle, indeed

A FRESHLY pickled olive, low in salt and still crunchy from the tree, can be a thing of ecstasy – so why are so few produced in New Zealand?

Mostly, it's because small producers are too scared. Pickling olives involves an expensive commercial kitchen – not to mention a lot of technical skill – if you are to avoid giving your customers botulism. It's far less hassle just to pick your olive and press it into oil. Also, few growers have planted the great table olive cultivars, such as sevillano and uovo di piccione, which are difficult to grow and rarely stocked by nurseries.

There are olive picklers in New Zealand, but only one major player: Telegraph Hill, near Hastings. Co-owner Rose Gresson has a background as a dietitian and developer of new food products for Wattie's. She understands the chemistry of what goes on in the barrels of olives, which she leaves for a full year to ferment gently and mature. As well as her own olives, Gresson also pickles for La Casa Toscana, a grove at Akaroa on Banks Peninsula. Owners Lionel and Gayle Sheridan took out the supreme award for their manzanillo oil at the 2009 New Zealand Olive Oil Awards and the same quality is evident in the kalamata, picholine, sevillano and uovo di piccione table olives they grow.

Low in salt, full of flavour and still crunchy, their olives take me back to the first moment I tasted a freshly pickled olive at La Boqueria market in Barcelona, all those years ago.

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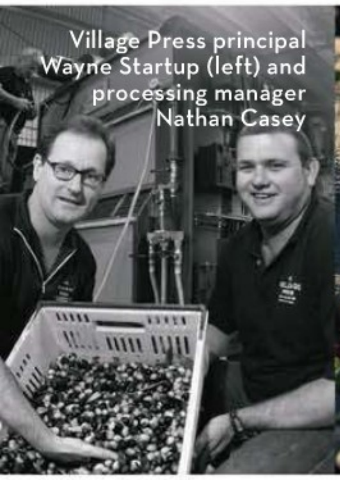
But the olives from New Zealand's biggest grove – around 46,000 trees – aren't even primarily intended for table oil. At Simunovich Estate on the Bombay Hills, Branka Simunovich's answer to the low return on olives is to add value: most of her oil is used in body care products. Her Italian Pieralisi machine grinds the olives into high-quality cosmetic-grade oil. It is then mixed with an imitation olive-flower fragrance. Her products, she says, are now sold at 900 outlets all over the world. An olive table spread is under development.

In between the hobbyist and the likes of Simunovich is Michael Seresin, one of the pioneers of Marlborough olives, who tries to combine hard business sense with commitment to biodynamic principles with his 7000 trees.

Cow manure is buried in the earth in cow horns between the autumn and spring equinoxes, then diluted with water and sprayed over the ground to

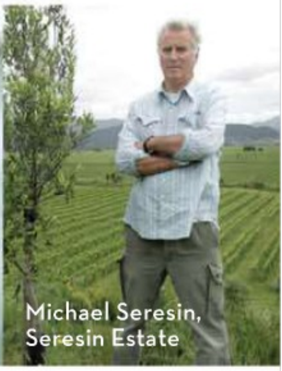


Village Press principal Wayne Startup (left) and processing manager Nathan Casey

Organic Leccino olives; left: Koroneiki

Picual

Kalamata



Michael Seresin, Seresin Estate

seed the humus in the soil. Finely ground quartz is also sprayed over the trees, while herbs such as yarrow, chamomile and valerian nettle are put in compost to regulate decomposition. A seaweed-based "tea" is sprayed over trees instead of copper.

"It's not just commercial and industrial," says estate manager Colin Ross. "It's something done with a bit of heart."

And, in an industry where a commitment to excellence and niche marketing are the only way to compete against cheap European oil imports, a bit of heart and passion is not such a bad thing. •

Dry horrors

TEN YEARS AGO my wife planted a pair of nameless olive trees next to the fence in our Wellington garden. They have rocketed in height and billowed forth luxurious foliage, but never yielded us more than a single preserving jarful of rather miserable, bitter little olives.

The trees, it turns out, are barnea, an Israeli cultivar perfect for screening out neighbours, but not so hot as a cropper. Intended for both pressing and pickling, barnea is a compromise variety – and a poor one – developed to survive in the dry, desert-like conditions of Israel. Which ought to have been warning enough for anybody proposing to plant it in damp old New Zealand.

Nevertheless, having been imported in 1986 by the late Marlborough nurseryman Gidon Blumenfeld, barnea was touted as the best variety for New Zealand, with his erstwhile business partner, Michael Ponder, boasting of yields of 40kg a tree at Ponder Estate. And it is true that, in the dry microclimates around Hawke's Bay, the Wairarapa and Canterbury, barnea can bear well, albeit only every second year. But wherever barnea strikes moist conditions, it gets wet feet, sulks and refuses to fruit at all. It has been a dead loss anywhere north of Hawke's Bay, and in the humid conditions of Waiheke Island and Northland it is prone to fungal disease, especially olive leaf spot.

At its best, the oil has an attractive creamy quality, although it can smell rather peculiarly of bananas. Nalini Baruch of Lot Eight prefers to describe this as a tropical fruit character, with a touch of guava.

At first, anybody planting barnea had to sign a contract to pay the Israeli government (via Blumenfeld) a royalty on every litre of oil they sold. Now we should be charging it for chainsawing and stump removal, for today barnea is being ripped out wholesale, not just in the moist regions but even in Marlborough itself: at the former Serendipity and Ponder estates, the one-time exemplars for barnea, the groves have been uprooted and replaced with grapes.

Buying local? Stick to the stickers

THE QUALITY of New Zealand's olive oils varies considerably with the producers' competence. Some growers, entranced by the pungent, peppery polyphenols of young olives, pick far too early, not realising that this can lead to unpleasantly bitter oil. In the case of picholine olives this can be disastrous – picked early, they exude foul, rotten-manure notes, though these characteristics are lost over time, as the oil becomes buttery and soft.

Another common mistake, says Olives New Zealand tasting panel leader Margaret Edwards, is to offer single-varietal oils for cultivars that are far better blended. In Italy, leccino, for example, is never sold as a single varietal, since it is too mild and bland, but it forms the perfect partner for the more peppery frantoio in the classic Tuscan blend.

Olives New Zealand has come to the buyer's aid with its red stickers – they read "ONZ Certified Extra Virgin Olive Oil". If you see one on a bottle it tells you the grower has not only sufficient commitment to belong to Olives New Zealand, the regulatory body, but has submitted its oil to the tasting panel, which tests for flavour defects not already shown up in chemical analysis.

The best assurance of all is the gold or silver sticker that tells you the oil has won a medal at the current year's Olives New Zealand Awards.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ISTOCKPHOTO; PHOTONEWZEALAND.COM; BILL KEARNS, DOMINION POST; SCOTT HAMMOND, MARLBOROUGH EXPRESS

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Confidently Pink

Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc **with a touch of pink**
(and now dripping in silver)

Gushing with confidence and easy charm, and made from the same stuff that put Marlborough on the map, Pink is neither tormented by tannins or desperate to impress.

A perfect match, like strawberries and cream, Pink offers the delicate charm of **Sauvignon Blanc with a touch of pink** (and the added appeal of looking pretty in a glass).

And what's wrong with that, we hear you ask?

SOUTHBANK ESTATE

One of life's pleasures

Foodtown woolworths countdown

band8422

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Auckland

Coco's Cantina

COCO'S CANTINA

★★★★

376-378 Karangahape Rd, City,
ph: 09-300 7582,
cocoscantina.co.nz
Tues-Fri from 5pm, Sat from 6pm
$$-$$$

Once a bit seedy and shabby, K Rd is becoming more shabby chic. Though you may still need to squint in some parts. The "seediness" is moving to the suburbs, making way for more salubrious concerns.

Newcomer Coco's Cantina is one of those. Run by well-seasoned hospitality professionals Renée Coulter and her sister Damaris, both ex-Rocco among other fine eateries, Coco's already feels like an established local – a casual place to drop in for a drink at the generously proportioned bar. Or take a seat at the red banquette lining the wall featuring a commissioned mural by local artist Askew, aka Elliot O'Donnell.

Coco's won favour immediately so you may have a small, though pleasant, wait for the well-executed food of chef Kyle Barton, also ex-Rocco. From the tiny kitchen comes punchy food of Italian influence. Starters include crisp-coated, Bolognese-enriched arancini, or risotto balls, spicy calamari, an antipasti platter and bruschetta.

KEN DOWNIE

Risotto, so often disappointing, had great texture – just enough firmness to the bite – and a good lemon zing to partner the asparagus.

The mains were sensational. Grilled chicken came with panzanella, the rustic Italian salad of crisped cubed bread, tomatoes, basil and a lively dressing. The chicken was superbly cooked, the moist flesh infused with smoky chargrill flavour. And half a bird so well done at $27 is great value.

The veal marsala is a popular choice – juicy fillets wrapped in prosciutto, the marsala sauce bolstered with onions and mushrooms on earthy polenta. An unconventional scattering of snowpeas added a fresh crunchy texture contrast.

Mains also include steak, fish of the day and two or three pastas.

A freshly made chocolate tart was near perfection and the light yet richly flavoured tiramisu the same.

The wines, most under $50, have been cleverly selected, testament to the professionalism displayed by the staff all round.

It's fun and funky – a bit rowdy, your mother might say – and when it comes to the food, it punches above its weight.

TONI MASON

Ratings GUIDE

The ratings reflect the reviewers' experience of food, wine, ambience and service, with food given the most weight. We include restaurants that provide a reasonable experience in all or most of these areas and do not feature any restaurant that would score no stars as we regard these as less than satisfactory. Why waste our readers' good time?

★okay ★★good ★★★very good ★★★★excellent ★★★★★outstanding
$ = up to $15; $$ = $16-$24; $$$ = $25-$32; $$$$ = $32+ for a typical main course including vegetables and GST.

SIDART RESTAURANT

★★★½

Level 1, Three Lamps Plaza,
283 Ponsonby Rd, ph: 09-360 2122,
sidart.co.nz
Dinner Tues-Sat, Lunch Thurs-Fri
$$$$

If you have ever tried completing a jigsaw with no clue what picture the pieces make, you know how frustrating it can be. SidArt can feel similar. All the bits are there, carefully and creatively delivered on the plate. You can sense that, when it all comes together, when you have nailed it, it will form a perfect picture. But it's not easy.

You are expected to take the tastes and textures, colours and concepts, and discern the culinary sense. With some dishes – like the exquisite coconut parfait, sesame praline, pineapple and lemongrass – clarity came early. With others – such as John Dory with parsnip and passionfruit, rosemary gel, pork belly and compressed apple – we felt thwarted, unable to discover what impression chef Sid Sahrawat intended.

I enjoy it when chefs challenge my palate and understanding of food combinations, when they are not afraid to explore and experiment, when they deliver food I know I cannot easily recreate at home. But I want to leave satisfied as well as sated; not feeling I was not clever enough to get it. And

KEN DOWNIE

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SidArt's Firstlight with Earl Grey, Goat's Cheese, Smoked Fig & Truffle Whip

restaurants

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KEN DOWNIE

Alberto Usseglio, Barolo

I felt a little like that after dining at SidArt. God knows Sahrawat is clever. I would delight in discovering how he comes up with dishes that include ingredients as disparate as fish and fruit, Earl Grey spaghetti, olives and coffee, smoked fig and truffle whip, oysters and cucumber. But I also want the chance to relax into the simple pleasure of good ingredients, well prepared and memorable, like the tasty dish of unadulterated oxtail with celeriac.

The service was pleasant and well honed, the décor comfortable yet unobtrusive, the wine list fairly standard, if a little pricy – but these accessories are not the stars here; it is the food.

We need expert chefs like Sahrawat who push boundaries. Yet we want to leave restaurants feeling uplifted as well as educated. The challenge is to find the balance, without compromising the individualism and edge that makes SidArt so fascinating. Serious food lovers should definitely pay a visit.

KERRY TYACK

BAROLO

★★★★

The Langham, 83 Symonds St, ph: 09-300 2885, langhamhotels.co.nz

Tues-Sat 6pm to late

$$$$

Named after Piedmont's most famous wine, Barolo announces itself not only as an Italian restaurant, but one specific to that region – a welcome distinction from the often amorphous "Italian" and an intriguing move for the top kitchen of a flash hotel where the order of the day is usually safe. The menu tells us Piedmontese food is "a mix of the lavish, sophisticated cuisine developed by the aristocratic families of the region, tempered with the robust, hearty food of the country people". Lavish would describe this dining room, formerly Partingtons, and robust and hearty is the sort of appetite required.

The chef-patron is Piedmont-born and trained Alberto Usseglio, who patrols the pass and attends to diners. One of the waiters is a compatriot. All bodes well.

A prudent diner might pass on the selection of outstanding house-made breads, including the lightest focaccia and slices of walnut bread. But why would you? The walnut bread arrives again, as a small loaf, with the antipasto of bagna càuda, an irresistible dip of anchovies, garlic, olive oil and a dash of cream served warm with roasted red capsicum and slivers of raw fennel.

Among the primi, handmade pasta is pinched around beef slow-cooked in red wine and served with fresh sage butter, or formed into little parcels of snapper and cauliflower, with tomato and basil sauce. When my fellow diner said he'd enjoyed the latter for its briny fishiness and spirited sauce, the waiter said some people found it a little salty – diet-conscious types, no doubt – a reassuring sign of synergy between the kitchen and floor, we thought.

Mains were similarly gutsy, with the likes of involtini of hapuku (replacing the advertised swordfish, which must have hit its mark with earlier diners), stuffed with artichokes and capers, and the recommended rabbit – braised in Arneis, a Piedmontese white wine.

Making it to dessert was rewarding. The sweetness of caramel semifreddo was nicely offset by tart lemon broth and berries; rich, foamy zabaglione of Moscato and rhubarb had to be paired with the recommended Moscato d'Asti.

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For such an establishment, prices are good, with $35 the most for a main. The wines will set you back, though. The Barolo in particular, lauded as the king of wines, came at a princely sum. You could go for the less-famous Barbera. Jancis Robinson describes it as the Bob Geldof of wines, "for years thought of as rather coarse and inconsequential but... its reputation has been so rehabilitated it is now taken extremely seriously".

Handily, the Piedmontese wines also come in 50ml tastes and plenty are available by the glass.

The food and wine is taken seriously here, delivered with care and good grace, and deserves serious attention in return.

TONI MASON

NICOLA EDMONDS

Wellington

Jacob Brown, The Larder

THE LARDER

★★★★

Cnr Camperdown and Darlington Rds, Miramar, ph: 04-891 0354, thelarder.co.nz
Dinner Thurs-Sat, lunch Tues-Sat, breakfast Sat-Sun
$$$

Like any suburban restaurant, The Larder is ruled by its location. It has to be all things to all people – from counter food and takeaways to lazy weekend brunches; sharply priced weekday lunches right up to providing a sexy neighbourhood bistro at night.

It helps that The Larder is not in just any old Wellington suburb, but Miramar, the heart of Wellywood, with Weta Studios just down the road. The techies troop in each morning tea and lunchtime, while in the evenings the well-heeled folk from nearby Seatoun and Karaka Bay round out the customer mix.

As the name suggests, this bistro pays tribute to the artisan producers who stock its larder. Portraits feature the likes of Rebecca Hardie Boyes, who supplies naturally fermented ginger beer, and Horowhenua market gardener Tom Hayes, responsible for the snow-white hue of the cauliflower purée. But the real star is chef-patron Jacob Brown.

Wellingtonians know Jacob as the former chef of the Boulcott Street Bistro, but few appreciate the enduring stature he also enjoys in Sydney. Lately, he has featured all over the Australian food media for opening this restaurant in his native New Zealand after cooking for seven years at Tabou, widely regarded as Sydney's leading French bistro.

Although he is reluctant to transpose the Tabou menu to Wellington, one carry-over is his twice-cooked gruyère and goat's cheese soufflé, and, true to his French leanings, there is often some form of offal, such as lamb's kidneys cooked pink in the middle with pancetta, roast shallots and frisée.

With only four entrées and four mains, Jacob likes to change something on the menu each week. A warm salad of scallops was paired with pork belly, a now-familiar combination. However, roasted beetroot added an unexpected but complementary flavour to the dish.

The fish is consistently excellent. Accompaniments may vary – maybe puy lentils and calamari, or prawns, peas and smoked prawn butter – but the cooking method remains constant: the fillet is fried skin-on until crisply golden, then flipped over to let the melted fat under the skin run through the flesh as the fish cooks briefly on the other side.

"Is your fish supplier Yellow Brick Road?" I asked Jacob. "Of course," he replied. "Is there anybody else?"

The wine list is no more than might be expected from a neighbourhood bistro, albeit with some interesting rarities.

The service is exemplary. All the staff are good, and in the evenings and on Tuesdays, Jacob's partner Sarah Bullock exudes an easy charm and confidence, and an acute sense of when to chat to customers and when to withdraw.

DAVID BURTON

Red Ginger

RED GINGER

★★★★

82 Tory St, ph: 04-385 7091, redginger.co.nz
Tues-Sun 11.30am-2.30pm and 5.30pm to late
$$

Although East-West fusion cuisine's bubble may have burst, pan-Asian fusion restaurants are thriving in Wellington, and the newly opened Red Ginger offers a rising challenge to the pack. As its menu rather wittily puts it, East meets East.

Owner Luke Duong already has a Vietnamese restaurant, Restaurant 88, where, in the lead-up to this venture, he gathered chefs from China, Vietnam and Malaysia to experiment with new concepts, combining the techniques of one Asian cuisine with the ingredients of another. All dishes were tested on panels before making it to the menu.

Mostly they work well, such as duck two ways, with breast meat wrapped with cucumber and spring onions in a Malaysian roti canai – a variation on the tiny pancakes served with Peking duck – and served with hoisin sauce. The second way is duck in a conventional stir-fry, with vegetables and a curious croûton garnish.

While there's a disconcerting lack of any clear frame of reference against which to judge this food, at least I didn't feel – as I so often do with so-called pan-Asian fusion – that it just amounted to dumbed-down Asian, tailored to the

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nursery palates of a young clientele who may consider themselves sophisticated but in reality don't like being challenged by smelly shrimp paste or fish sauce.

On the contrary, the dried shrimp that forms the basis for Hong Kong's famous XO Sauce comes through quite distinctly in the wok-tossed Asian turnip cake. The "cake" is actually a dozen or so soft cubes, fried and complemented with mushrooms and Asian sausage.

BILL NICHOL

As a variation on the generic har gow (shrimp and rice flour dumpling) seen in every Chinese yum cha house, the Red Ginger chefs wrap their prawns with water chestnut inside Vietnamese rice-paper rolls, and paired with a novel house-made chilli jam that exudes an uncompromising whiff of fish sauce.

Orange beef is a fresh, modern take upon that hoary old standard from the fluorescent-lit Kiwi Cantonese café of yore: startlingly tender cubes of beef are served with cubes of orange flesh, julienned orange peel and fresh orange juice. Deep-fried Indonesian krupuk (prawn crackers) make a novel garnish.

Open only a few months, Red Ginger is already hugely busy, so service can be erratic. And where some waiters are bubbling with personality, others have none at all.

Much din arises from the room's austere aesthetic: the former garage's interior has been stripped back to its shell. ArcHaus architects have installed an illuminated timber ceiling feature and a central light well with Japanese-like timber screening. So just as the food here is pleasingly contemporary, so too is the ambience that surrounds it.

DAVID BURTON

Dunedin

LUNA BAR & RESTAURANT
★★★
314 Highgate, Roslyn,
ph: 03-477 2227, lunaroslyn.co.nz
Mon-Fri from 11am, Sat-Sun from 9am
$$$$

Luna Bar & Restaurant

Expansive hilltop views over the city and harbour, along with smart décor make Luna a popular suburban restaurant. As does Sam Gasson, who recently took over as head chef and cooks its simple but flavoursome food. His beef dishes are to be recommended, both the ginger beef salad with crisp noodles entrée, and the main of grilled rib-eye with smoked paprika onion rings, which is also on the bar menu.

The entrée of flaky pastry around a filling of tomato, buffalo mozzarella and basil pesto was crisp and light as air. Many items have a titillating crispness on top – the slice of salmon fillet with brittle salmon-skin garnish, the slow-cooked pork belly (no, not crackling) and the potato terrine under it.

You need to order side vegetables or salads with the mains, which can make it a bit pricy.

However, the uncomplicated salads and simply cooked vegetables were well prepared – roasted local asparagus with lemon juice, butter and sea salt, or a simple Caesar with just cos, parmesan, dressing and a few croûtons.

The small wine list includes several Central Otago wines, some from lesser known producers such as 8 Ranges and Black Quail, and there are blackboard specials as well.

The reverberation of hard surfaces can make this restaurant too noisy for a tête-à-tête when it's busy, though it's quieter in the lounge upstairs. The service, however, is friendly and prompt – and it's close enough to the city to pop up to for lunch: some of the dinner entrées are offered for lunch also.

At night, there is no pressure to hurry. The staff will even bring over a pair of binoculars for you as you linger over tea or port to watch the darkening harbour and city lights.

CHARMIAN SMITH

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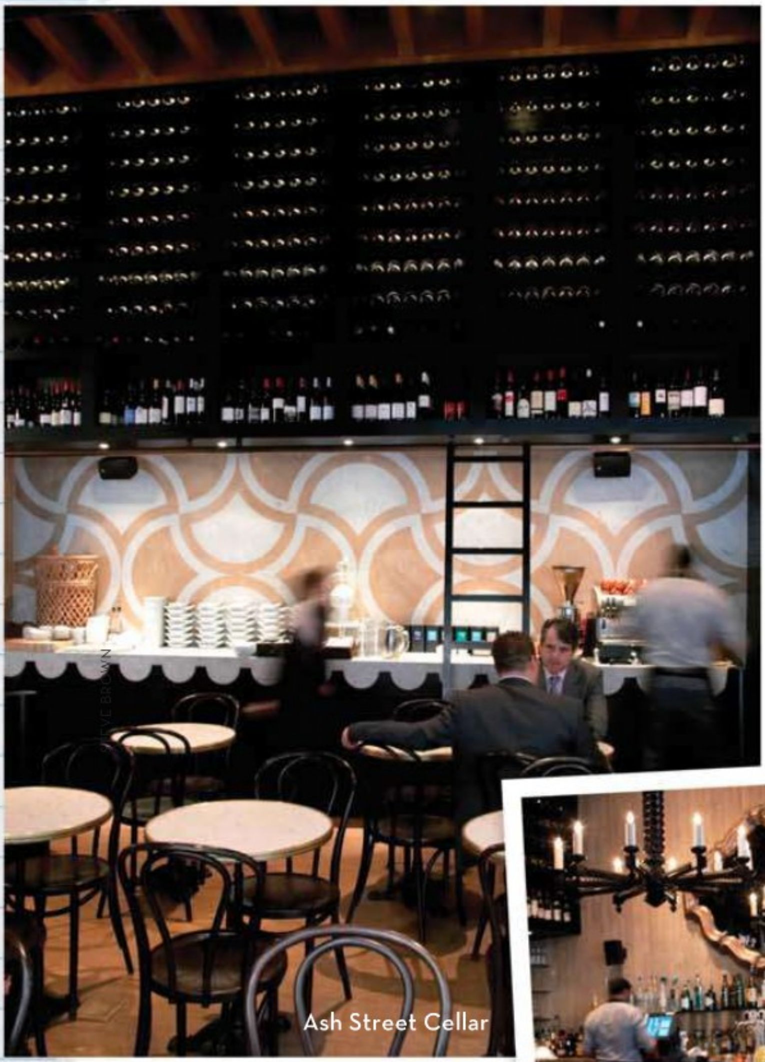
WHAT A SWELL PARTY

Have you heard? Sydney's liquor laws have gone from swill to swell, opening the way for a blossoming winebar scene. It's wonderland, writes **JANE ADAMS**


STEVE BROWN

Ash Street Cellar

Ancestry and migration are major determinants of culinary culture. Just think of the impact of Australia's convict forebears, those miscreant settlers who bequeathed us their deeply ingrained passion for bangers and mash, tea and beer. It wasn't until the mid-20th century that a flood of southern-Mediterranean migrants, mainly Italians and Greeks, infiltrated such new staples as pasta, tomato sugo, feta and salami, and an enthusiasm for coffee and wine.

Back then, the licensing laws deemed that public drinking should cease at 6pm. It created the "six o'clock swill" when workers would rush to the pubs to down a few fast beers on the way home. Over time, those strictures were eased, especially in Victoria where the guardians of good gastronomy ensured even the smallest, hippest café in Melbourne, that more European city, was permitted to serve wine – with or without food.

Curiously, it took the powers that be in New South Wales until July 2008 to bring in a similar situation. Now we, too, can partake of a glass of flinty, refreshing Tasmanian Riesling sipped with freshly shucked briny oysters before heading to our after-work French class; or a warming Tempranillo with chorizo tapas; or an Austrian Grüner Veltliner or a Central Otago Pinot with nothing but good company.

Sydney's café and bar owners took a while to embrace the legal change (they were not aided by continuing red tape), but 18 months on there are signs a new winebar culture has taken root. Up stairs, down lanes, even in converted shipping containers, atmospheric, often pocket-sized venues are popping up where the star is no longer the chef. It's the turn of sommeliers and wine geeks, those knowing palates just dying to trip you up with the latest unheard-of variety – like Greco di Tufo, Parellada, Scheurebe or Bombino Bianco. No, the latter is *not* ice-cream.

The focus is on what you drink rather than what you eat, but that is not to suggest you can't eat well. The establishments below offer great-value, flexible grazing that means you can mix 'n' match your by-the-glass selection with everything from crisp pig's ears to live Tasmanian clams.

And when you do, drink a toast to those adventurous Mediterranean migrants to whom we owe a debt of gastronomic gratitude – because escabeche is not a great match with Earl Grey.

ASH STREET CELLAR

1 Ash St, ph: 02-9240 3000

One of the new downtown laneway establishments, courtesy of the trendsetting Hemmes family, where sommelier Franck Moreau's 22-page global list sets a cracking pace. Certain wines are offered in three volumetric options – a taste, glass or carafe – allowing you to range from Gosset Grand Rosé Champagne to 15-year-old Malmsey as you graze on the tapas of chef Lauren Murdoch. Moreau arranges his selections by style, such as "crisp and grassy" or "savoury with wild red berries", which sees the best of the New and Old Worlds standing shoulder to shoulder. Look out for the "hidden treasures" and stockbrokers on a by-the-glass budget.

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Saint Clair Pioneer Block 12 Lone Gum Gewurztraminer 2008
International Dry Aromatic over £10

Trophy: Decanter International Wine Awards 2009
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Trophy: International Wine Challenge London 2009
Saint Clair Pioneer Block 15 Strip Block Pinot Noir 2007
New Zealand Marlborough Pinot Noir Trophy

Trophy: Winestate Magazine Wine of the Year Awards, November 2009
Saint Clair Pioneer Block 6 Oh! Block Sauvignon Blanc 2009
Sauvignon Blanc Category Winner

Trophy: Hong Kong International Wine Awards
Saint Clair Pioneer Block 3 43 Degrees Sauvignon Blanc 2009
NZ and International Champion Sauvignon Blanc

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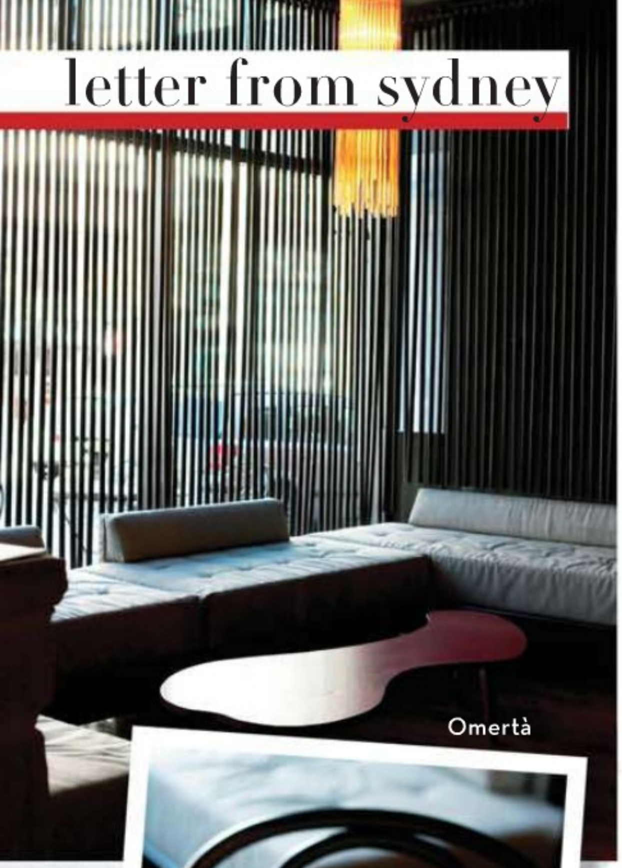

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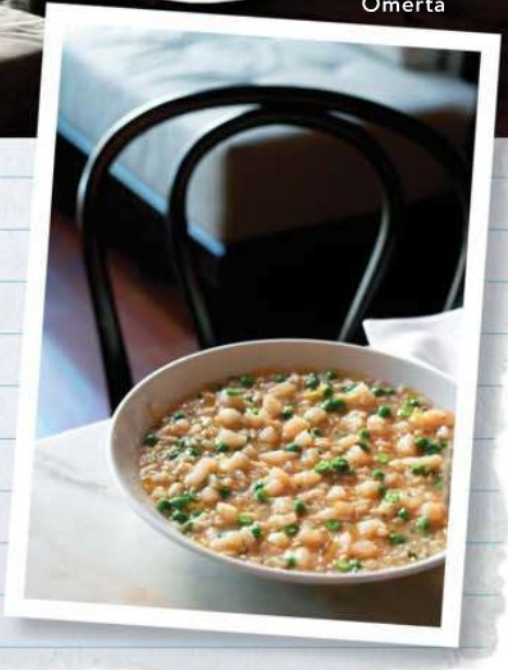

BOOTLEG BAR

175 Victoria St, Potts Point, ph: 02-9361 3884, bootlegbar.com.au
The skinny shopfront is easy to miss, but once you find it, be prepared to jostle for a stool or booth at this buzzy neighbourhood enoteca offering daily blackboard trattoria classics – tuna carpaccio, squid ink linguine and lush lasagne – and a suitably Italy-focused wine list.

STEVE BROWN

DELICADO FOODS

134 Blues Point Rd, McMahons Point, ph: 02-9955 9399, delicadofoods.com.au
The mood at this initiative of award-winning sommelier Ben Moechtar is fiery red España and tapas, matched with a succinct list leaning mostly to good-value Spanish or South American imports. Start your day with huevos al plato and sparkling Vallformosa Rosé Cava, or end it with Tempranillo and Glenloth chicken, served here with chorizo mousse. Be sure to browse the adjacent specialist Spanish bottle shop. Ole!

FIREFLY TAPAS & WINE BAR

Pier 7, 17 Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay, ph: 02-9241 2031, fireflybar.com.au
Tapas take to the waterfront at this Walsh Bay find where shock jocks unwind with Clos Henri Sauvignon Blanc or Hugel Pinot Blanc and share plates of Tasmanian Woodbridge smoked trout and Sicilian-style stuffed squid. The wine is tilted to cool southern hemisphere regions like Mornington Peninsula, Tasmania, Marlborough and Central Otago. A second outlet operates in Neutral Bay. (24 Young St, ph: 9909 0193).

GPO CHEESE & WINE ROOM

Basement, GPO, 1 Martin Place, ph: 02-9229 7701, gposydney.com
The basement of Sydney's central post office is now a vast upmarket food hall, an throbbing underground hub for those powering the city's commerce. If you are in fromage mode, this is your spot. The best deal here is the wine and cheese flight. Take off with three Aussie artisan cheeses and matches: Tarago River's Strzelecki Blue with Argentinean Terrazas Malbec; Small Cow camembert from the Southern Highlands with a 2007 Bourgogne; and Grandewe Fog from Tasmania with Scarborough Pinot Noir Rosé. Leave time to browse the excellent retail cheese selection.

MILLE VINI

397 Crown St, Surry Hills, ph: 02-9357 3366 (no bookings)
No guesses as to the leading nationality in this dimly lit, revitalised betting shop with sandstone walls and smart fit-out where patrons sit at counter stools to peruse an Italian-stallion wine list. Choose from Valpolicella, Vernaccia and Fiano while nibbling on spuntini – snacks like arancini, chargrilled polpi and stuffed zucchini flowers – or more filling entrée serves of gnocchi with gorgonzola piccante.

OMERTÀ

235 Victoria St, Darlinghurst, ph: 02-9360 1011, omerta.com.au
Forget the sinister connections of the name – sommelier Glen Davis has designed a dazzling short list with such savoury Italian biancos as Plozner Tocai Friulano and Jermann Vinnae, and champion rossos covering a range of regions from Piemonte and Valpolicella to Sardinia. Match them with the day's divine cooked-to-order carnaroli risotto.

TASTEVIN BISTRO & WINE BAR

292-4 Victoria St, Darlinghurst, ph: 02-9356 3429, tastevin.com.au
Discreetly hidden, this upstairs French bistro embraces a rear lounge bar where late-night suppers are classic onion soup, charcuterie plates and croque-monsieurs with a mostly Gallic wine list. Open late.

THE WINERY BY GAZEBO

285A Crown St, Surry Hills, ph: 02-9331 0833, thegazebos.com.au
An abandoned inner-city 19th-century waterworks has been transformed by the canny Short family to create the hottest new hangout for wine buffs. Shared plates are the go with true and rare gems like Dalwhinnie's Chardonnay and Heathcote's seductive Syrahmi, or more mainstream picks bracketed on the list under no-pretence headings like "Unpronounceable", "Slurpable" and "Big and Bold". Thursday is "Sticky and Stinky" cheese night.

TIME TO VINO

66 Stanley St, Darlinghurst, ph: 02-9380 4252, timetovino.com
Any time's a good time, according to host Clint Hillery, who will talk you into trying varieties you've never heard of, like Godello and Negroamaro while you nibble on smoked mozzarella and pea arancini and wait for friends. When they arrive you might tuck into Carcassonne-style confit duck and Toolangi Pinot. Pasta Gulch (aka Stanley St) is all the better for this rustic, friendly enoteca.

WINE ODYSSEY

39-43 Argyle St, The Rocks, ph: 02-8114 0256 (Australia freephone 1300-136 498), wineodyssey.com.au
A wine bar with a difference where you load credit on to a swipe machine, then serve yourself from an auto-dispense Enomatic wine bar with 44 different Australian wines including Grange. Pour sizes are 25ml, 75ml and 150ml, the latter best sipped at pavement tables while watching the passing parade in the Rocks precinct. Try chef Mark Beattie's mini-dish matches with sommelier Donna Freeman's eclectic wine flights. •

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shopper's notebook

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Spoil your family and friends this Christmas season with the Allpress gift box. The festive Christmas Blend, a beautiful coffee with rich cocoa flavours and a hint of fruity sweetness to enjoy with Christmas cake, comes together with a filter cone and papers for easy brewing anywhere. Visit Allpress Coffee, 266 Ponsonby Rd, Auckland, or ph: 09-376 4726. RRP$45

High-quality Japanese Wasabi knives are extraordinarily sharp. A set of two knives, sharpening stone and knife wallet is $125 delivered in NZ. Ph: 0508-927 224, wasabiknives.co.nz

The stylish Domobar Junior produces café-quality coffee at home, any time. See valentemachinery.com for distributors or ph: 09-361 2506

Experience an indigenous food trail through native bush, or fish for trout and cook it in hot sand while you soak in a thermal pool nestled beneath a dormant volcano. Only in Rotorua: rotoruanz.com

Smoked Salmon Pastrami is an exciting new product in the Regal Salmon range. The salmon is cold-smoked, crusted with a classic New York pastrami mix of three cracked peppers, then thinly sliced. It's ideal for tapas, snacks or even adding spice to breakfast menus. RRP $16.95 for a 200g pack.

Impress your friends this barbecue season with the Hellers Sensational Sausages range. Styles include: London Pride; Gourmet Chicken with Marjoram & Thyme; Smoked Venison & Red Wine; Honey Lamb & Rosemary; and more, hellers.co.nz

Water is the new wine when it comes to making a lasting impression and, if you want to channel the ultimate in sophistication, then you need a bottle of Te Waihou Reserve Sparkling at your table. For more information visit tewaihouwater.co.nz

The OTTO stovetop espresso and milk steamer is a stainless-steel stunner, inspired by the classic Atomic coffee machines. It comes with latte glasses, milk jug, tamper, training DVD and travel case. RRP $875 from Caffe L'affare, ph: 0800-523 327, laffare.co.nz

For more than a quarter of a millennium Maille has been making fine French mustards, oils and pickles. Its Dijon Originale, Wholegrain and Dijonnaise mustards are found in all good supermarkets, RRP $4.25 for 200ml.

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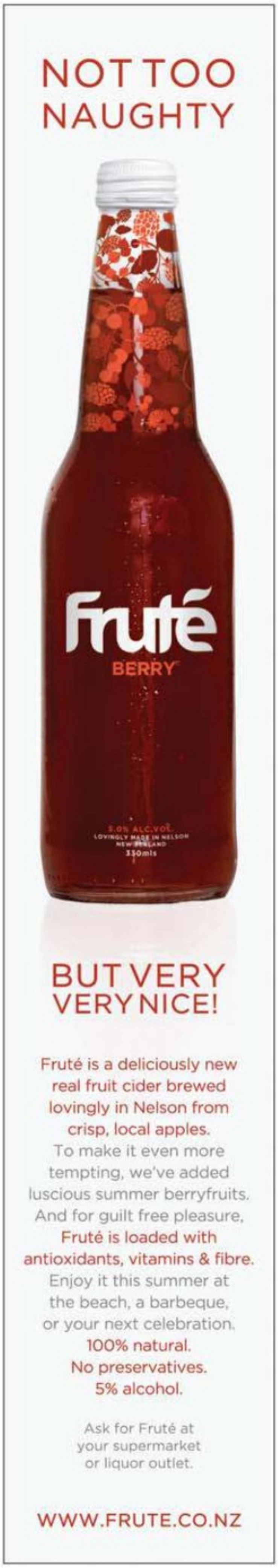
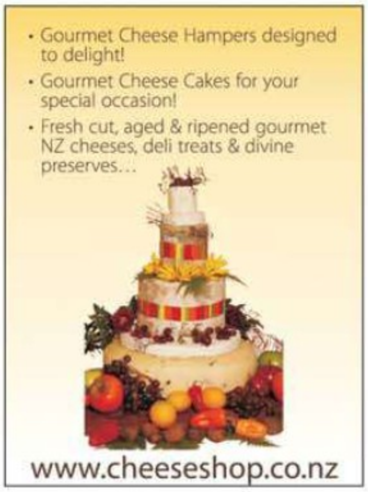
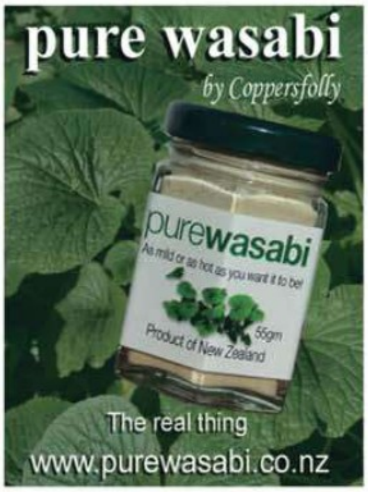
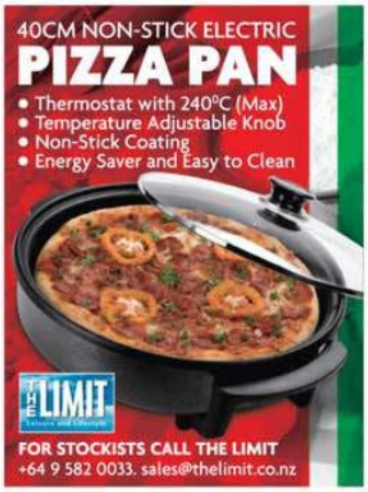
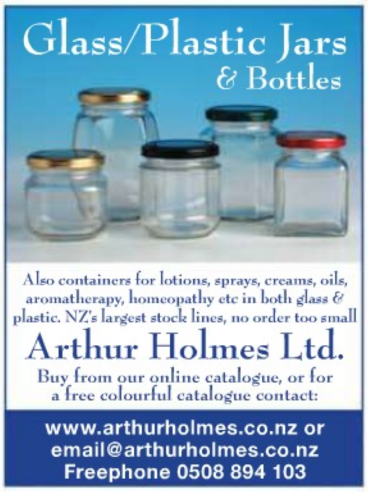
YOUR GUIDE TO EXPLORING WINE, FOOD AND ASSOCIATED GOOD LIVING











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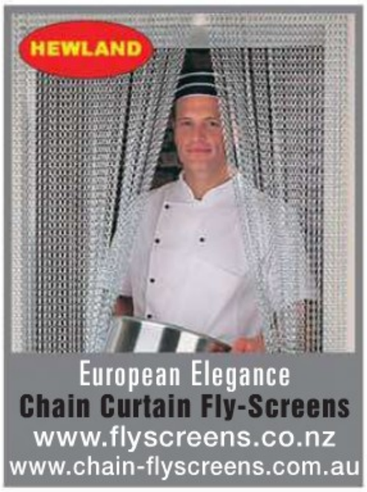

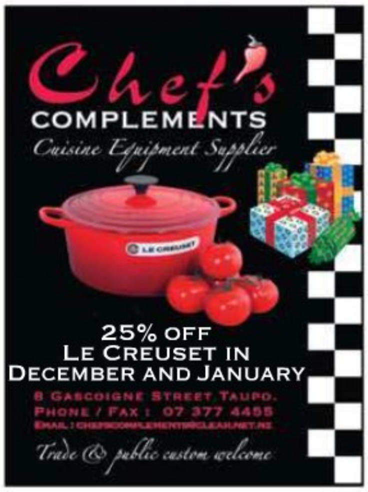

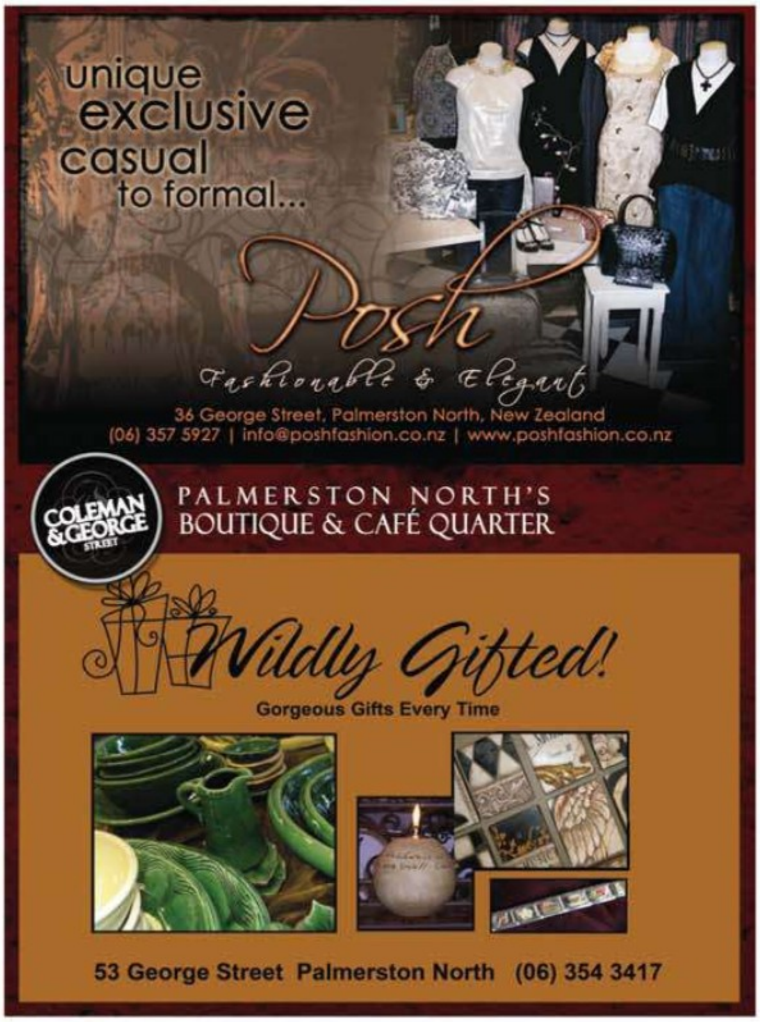

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The Studio of Tableware, thestudio.co.nz
Tom Ford, tomford.com

CUISINE ARTISAN AWARDS 2010 page 42
Breadboard (Corso De' Fiori); La Chamba plate (French Country Collections, for stockists, ph: 0800-503 500).

SUMMER AFTERNOON page 46
Sophie Conran dinnerware and iittala stemless white wine glass (The Studio of Tableware).

GONE FISHIN' page 58
Thanks to Mike Audi from KSV vegetable suppliers for the fresh vegetables. Fishing hooks and sinkers, dominoes, serving utensils, blue- and red-rimmed serving plate, blue and gold floral patterned serving plate and pottery bowl (Antiques of Epsom); glass sailing decanter with matching shot glasses, glass bowl, glass bottle, salt and pepper shakers, dinner plates, green-rimmed 50s serving plate and red- and gold-rimmed serving plate (Babushka Antiques); table top, wine glasses and La Chamba baking dish (French Country Collections, for stockists ph: 0800-503 500); seat (La Cigale).

TRUE NORTH page 78
Justin North wears T-shirt and shirt (Country Road); Georgia North wears a maxi-dress (Muccia by Melanie Cutfield), jewellery (Dinosaur Designs) and Tom Ford sunglasses; Sofia wears Country Road and Charlie wears Bonds; platters, salad servers and pitcher (Dinosaur Designs); Riedel Champagne glasses and Happy O glassware (Glengarry); plates (Australian Fine China); chairs and stool (Ici et La).

VOICI TAHITI page 88
Pewter serving tray, Cosi Tabellini dinner plate and Tony Sly plate (Cranfields); Rosenthal Moon Platinum and Simplicity glass jug (The Studio of Tableware); ceramic dinner and entrée plate (Corso De' Fiori); white linen (Martha's Fabrics).

MUST-HAVE MUSTARDS page 99
Cutlery Noor (The Studio of Tableware).

INDIAN SUMMER page 100
Decorative silver plates, blue Crown Lynn plates, gold and pale green saucers and gold-rimmed bowl (Antiques of Epsom); small green bowl and oval green serving plate (Japanese Lifestyle); iittala tumblers (The Studio of Tableware); glass votive candle holder, La Chamba cookware and plate (French Country Collections, for stockists, ph: 0800-503 500); cream and black ceramic bowls (Acland Holdings, for stockists, ph: 09-630 6177); table top (La Cigale).

BEST DRESSED page 112
Linen (Siena); Open Up tumbler, organic ceramic plate and pasta bowl (Nest); cream and black ceramic bowl (Acland Holdings, ph: 09-630 6177 for stockists); Cutipol Ebony cutlery (The Studio of Tableware).

QUICK SMART page 120
La Chamba plate (French Country Collections, for stockists, ph: 0800-503 500).

COURSE YOU CAN DO IT page 126
Thomas Loft White dinnerware, Hiram Wild Jesmond and Kings cutlery (The Studio of Tableware).

AT YOUR REQUEST page 176
Braga small and large dip bowl (Country Road). ●

Enjoy a fabulous two day feast of food, wine and entertainment!

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KIERAN SCOTT

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■ Whenever I am in Wellington for business I always go to Monsoon Poon, which has the most fantastic food. I would love the recipe for my favourite dish, the 25 Herb & Spice Indian Lamb Curry. It's to die for.
Mella Chand
Via email

25 HERB & SPICE INDIAN LAMB CURRY

Mike Egan, owner of Monsoon Poon (12 Blair St, Wellington, ph: 04-803 3555) happily gave us chef Raju Rai's recipe for this delicious curry.

- 120ml canola oil
- 2 teaspoons whole cardamom pods
- 12 black peppercorns
- 8 whole cloves
- 4 star anise
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 or 2 whole dried chillies
- 500g onions, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 5cm piece fresh ginger, grated (discard fibrous part)
- 200g tomato paste
- 1 cup tomato sauce (homemade if available)
- 1 teaspoon each ground cardamom, cumin and garam masala
- 1½ teaspoons ground chilli
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 2kg lamb shoulder meat, cut into 2cm-3cm cubes
- 3 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 2 cups chopped fresh coriander leaves and stems

Heat the oil in a large saucepan or casserole on a medium heat, fry the whole spices for 30 seconds then add the onions and stir-fry for about 10 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger, tomato paste and sauce, stir well then add all the ground spices. Add 2 cups of cold water, bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add all the lamb and simmer gently for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the salt and vinegar, and cook for a further 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add more water if necessary to make a good gravy consistency. Stir in half the coriander and use the rest to garnish each serving.

Accompany with basmati rice, naan and your favourite chutney. Serves around 8.

■ I was recently in Melbourne and ate the most soul-warming soup at Cumulus Inc, which had some crisp chicken and fresh crab in the soup. I'd love the recipe so I can make it whenever I feel the need to nourish my soul again.
L Annette Stevens
Auckland

CRAB & SCALLOP SOUP WITH CRISP CHICKEN & SORREL OIL

Cumulus Inc is an innovative, casual restaurant/café in the heart of Melbourne (45 Flinders Lane, ph: 03-9650 1445). Chef Josh Murphy collaborates with owner Andrew McConnell to develop recipes such as this velvety soup. Josh tells us he prefers fresh spanner crab, but as it's not always available they may use a packaged product. Frozen spanner

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crab is available in New Zealand from Nosh, Farro Fresh, Auckland Fish Market and some fish shops.

The chicken and sorrel oil make delicious garnishes, but they are not essential – the soup is still wonderful without them.

For the soup

- 3 onions, thinly sliced
- oil for frying
- 1½ litres light chicken stock
- 80g ginger, sliced and tied in muslin
- 4 large scallops
- 2 tablespoons sushi (short-grain) rice
- ½ tablespoon miso
- ½ tablespoon light soy sauce

Gently fry the onions in a little oil, without colouring, until translucent and cooked. Add the stock and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add the remaining ingredients and simmer for a further 10 minutes. Remove the ginger and purée the soup. Pass through a fine sieve and check the seasoning. Adjust with salt and light soy if necessary. Set aside.

For the chicken garnish

- 1kg chicken wings
- salt
- 500g duck fat

Cut the wings into joints and lightly salt them. Set aside for 4 hours then wipe off the salt. Confit the wings by placing in an oven dish, covering in duck fat and placing in a low oven until completely cooked (about 1 hour).

Allow to cool then pick the meat off the bones, ensuring you don't have any cartilage or small bones. Very finely shred the meat then pack into a lined tray so the chicken is about 8mm thick. Refrigerate until completely cold then dice into 8mm cubes.

KIERAN SCOTT

For the sorrel oil

2 cups sorrel
1 cup light vegetable oil

ask Q&A

What is the difference between hot-smoked and cold-smoked fish?
Jan Sullivan
Via email

Both methods impart smoky flavours to food. Hot smoking uses direct heat from fire or coals and smoke from aromatic wood such as manuka. The fish is often cured lightly in a brine then smoked at a high heat, leaving it firm textured, fully cooked and lightly salted.

Cold-smoked fish is brined for a longer time than hot-smoked fish to reduce bacterial growth. It is smoked with indirect heat at a low temperature, often for some days. The fish is delicate in flavour with a relatively high salt content.

Cold-smoked foods have more risk of bacterial contamination than hot smoked, so best avoided during pregnancy or by those with compromised immune systems.

Purée the sorrel and oil in a blender until the oil is bright green. Transfer to a metal bowl over ice to cool as quickly as possible then strain through a sieve lined with muslin.

To serve

100g spanner crab
salt to taste
lemon juice to taste
freshly ground white pepper to taste

Reheat the soup and deep-fry the chicken cubes for 1 minute; they should hold their shape and come out golden and crackling.

Dress the crabmeat with salt, lemon juice and white pepper.

Place some chicken cubes and crab in the bottom of 4 small bowls and pour the hot soup over. Finish with a generous teaspoonful of sorrel oil. Serves 6 as a starter. •

Credits: Braga small and large dip bowl from Country Road. For full details, see Credits Index.

GET A TASTE OF EASY VIRTUE

An American woman with a failed marriage under her belt and an Englishman get swept up in a whirlwind romance in the South of France that ends with a shot-gun wedding. The consequences of such whimsical behaviour become all too apparent when they travel to Britain to face his stuffy, traditional family.

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CARTE BLANCHE

All's fare in war... **PHIL WALLINGTON** lifts the lid on culinary inventiveness that rattled a few cages

The past year has been abundant with indignant tales of the plight of the animals most of us know and love but still manage to eat and enjoy when the chips are down – or the rice, or the pasta for that matter. As a dedicated carnivore I have been dismayed equally by the ignorance of city folks about what goes on down on the farm and the vehemence of their views as expressed in the media.

The television news and current affairs entertainment shows were out to provoke violent passions. They got it in spades by talking to people who believed Mike King's Pauline conversion from a happy barbecue chef into an activist willing to bite the hand that once fed him was an event to rank with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

A group of dedicated vegetarians or fanatical vegans invading a poultry shed or a pig farm were bound to be "shocked" by what they saw. "Cruel and callous" were principal adjectives deployed, although "barbarous" got a good run, too.

As I watched the "appalled" reactions of the activists I began to believe many of them had had arrested childhoods. Somewhere after leaving the breast they had been frightened by an egg! They live in a world where pert little pigs called "Percy" and cherished chooks called "Henrietta" live to ripe old age and grow to possess wisdom that surpasses our understanding.

Let's get real in 2010. Meat is marvellous and when deprived of it in its familiar forms – lamb, beef, pork chicken etc – I am always willing to explore the culinary possibilities of more exotic species. I have dined on kangaroo and emu (in one memorable lunch in Adelaide eating both creatures that rampantly guard the Australian Coat of Arms). I have supped on wallaby and possum, snake and crocodile, not to mention ostrich, guinea fowl, suckling pig, pigeon, quail and pheasant – to name a few. Horse I tried (only once) 35 years ago in Paris and it is to that place that my thoughts turn in honour of the dedicated gourmands who survived the Siege of the City in 1870.

ILLUSTRATION BY DARON PARTON

EVEN THE EXPENSIVE CHAMPIONS OF THE TURF BEGAN TO APPEAR ON MENUS

With the Prussians at the gates, gastronomic inventiveness reached new heights. As the herds of cattle and sheep that had filled every vacant park and square in the City of Light were consumed, the formerly despised horse meat became highly prized. It should be remembered that horse only came on sale in France in 1866 as a means of providing cheap cuts for the urban poor. But now, with little else available, the master chefs were soon creating dishes like consommé de cheval, filet de cheval rôti and culotte de cheval à la mode. Even the expensive champions of the turf began to appear on menus of the more expensive restaurants.

Next to appear on the plate were cats and dogs. They were soon followed by rats and pigeons. And it didn't end there. The zoos were raided for their exotic inmates. Bear, deer, antelope, camel and kangaroo all fell to the butchers' knives.

The "big cats" survived. Lions and tigers were, it seems, far too ferocious and difficult to butcher. Also strangely exempt from the menu were the apes and monkeys. This latter omission may have been due to the influence of Charles Darwin, whose *The Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection* was published in 1859 and had been translated into French.

Having witnessed the obsequies which last year accompanied the death of Kashin, the Auckland Zoo elephant, I would advise the tender-hearted or squeamish reader to venture no further. In what today would be regarded as a heinous, capital crime, Castor and Pollux, the young elephants of Le Jardin d'Acclimatation, were shot. They were bought by M Roos, of Le Boucherie Anglaise, and sold for 40 francs a pound to those fortunate enough to be able to afford what was an exorbitant price.

While all this was going on inside Paris, the German armies were living in the lap of luxury. Magnificent vintages were "liberated" from château cellars and Bismarck, the "Iron Chancellor", further enlarged his enormous stomach with meals of roasted oysters, trout en croûte, goose and wild-boar's head. The latter was served with a compote of raspberry jelly and mustard. Over the port, Bismarck was once heard to gloat over his enemies' predicament faring on elephant's trunk and salmi de rat: "C'est la guerre. C'est la vie." ●

■ Veteran journalist and trencherman Phil Wallington is the producer of Media7.

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